Social Media and Elections in Africa, Volume 2

Challenges and Opportunities

Edited by

Martin N. Ndlela
Winston Mano

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Editors

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Social Media, Political Cultures and Elections in Africa

Winston Mano and Martin N. Ndlela

Introduction

Protests against misrule are becoming more and more visible in the digital age in Africa. Consider the civil disobedience in Sudan that culminated in the 11 April 2019 Sudanese coup d'état that deposed President Omar al-Bashir after 30 years in power or the energetic youth-driven street protests in Algeria demanding substantive reforms even after forcing the resignation of long-serving President Abdelaziz Bouteflika in April 2019. Similarly, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo President Kabila was forced not to stand for re-election after fierce protests against his continued

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hold on power after his term had expired in 2016. The constitution barred him from running for a third term. In Cameroon protesters have become more visible against poor performance of the government of Paul Biya, who at 86 is one of the oldest rulers in the world. In Egypt and Uganda, protests are common in spite of the heavy-handed response of the authorities. In most cases the military hold on to power or are willing to sacrifice political leaders to retain power. The book starts by mentioning these prominent cases of protests, which we argue have become more visible due to social media. In these cases, new digital tools are an important part of the political changes.

Increased political change in Africa has coincided with the introduction of new communication technologies and services. From online electoral campaigning, online fundraising for politics to electronic voting, the new technologies are changing the way we communicate politics in Africa. The internet, and social media in particular, is arguably having unprecedented implications in the mediation of political culture and power, doing away with established forms of gatekeeping in traditional journalism. Online communication is creating relatively more open platforms for direct interaction in politics. Social media, which develops from existing and past technologies, has captivated African audiences and users, giving voice to many including youths, women, diasporas, rural voters, urban voters and others usually marginalised in electoral issues. Social media is winning more people to politics through a unique blend of audio, visuals and other information types that permit close monitoring of those seeking votes. It is bringing new agency, tactics and strategies to the evolving relationship between politicians and citizens. It has brought more innovative ways to handle political party interests and ideologies. New technologies have also given birth not only to a variety of new actors, but to more potent forms of influence and control. At the heart of the emerging political cultures and political behaviours, there is a complex interplay of online and offline networks that have brought change and continuity to electoral politics as we know it. Traditional political parties in Africa have had to adopt new technologies and adapt to the emerging new technological environments where individuals and groups have become producers of information. They have had to embrace social media both as innovation and as a strategy to cope with change. Even though the internet penetration rates are still comparably lower than in other regions of the world, Africans are using social media in ways that are producing changes to political cultures.

However, the emerging accounts of the internet and new technologies in Africa are often too rosy and deterministic, choosing, for example, to

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view the internet as a magic bullet that transforms and brings social change. The impact of the technologies is taken to be automatic, with immense revolutionary changes to African life. This technicity underplays the social factors and lacks sufficient evidence. This book refutes such an instrumentalist view of the internet and argues that the new technologies are but tools that are reliant on users, in contexts with supervening social necessities that need to be carefully investigated. There is a need to critically discuss social media, its policy frameworks, users, their contexts, the social media applications they use and how these impact specific African political systems. Analysing social media in terms of societal processes will not only help explain the meaning of social sharing and dialoguing in social media but also help to answer questions about its relevance in changing African political contexts.

It is also important to temper the above optimistic view of social media in African democracy with a frank discussion of risks that arise from elections dependent on social media. The main concern is technological control, fraud and manipulation of the electoral process to the extent that the will of the people will not be exercised freely. Military, corporate and political capture of these technologies is already a reality in some of the African countries. The promise of participatory democratic culture is restrained by insistence on narrow state-led security issues, hyper-commercial logic and neoliberal modes of life which drive the technical design of these technologies. In reality the emerging communities are not just about politics but also oriented towards entertainment, including sports, gambling and religion. Social media's efficacy is also undermined by its poor penetration, creating a divide in knowledge between those connected and those outside the net. There is a need to investigate the growing differences between virtual and offline citizenship in the African contexts. Arguably, at the moment, only a few Africans have the digital literacy needed for social change. The possibilities that come with new technologies are, therefore, dependent on existing social conditions, including gender, income and education. Social media's research can be examined through a deeper understanding of existing political arrangements in a given historical and political moment. The book is aware of the above-mentioned barriers and provides a provisional critical appraisal of social media and elections in Africa by focusing on evidence from across the continent.

The ascendance of social media in African politics comes at a time when so-called traditional media are increasingly captured by market and political forces. Forces of censorship, political controls and neoliberal agendas

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have combined to limit the efficacy of public media for political communication. Publicly funded media have failed to create more democratic communication linked to social change. In many African countries there are weak public (service) media systems monopolised by the state. Business and commercial interests often side with the government to manipulate the public political agenda. While political authorities have traditionally controlled television, radio and newspapers, new media has proven difficult to control. Shutdowns of websites or strictures to internet service provision remain clear testimonies of the fear of social media in Africa. The extent to which these clampdowns are justified is debatable. Social media penetration is poor and its content has both negative and positive influence on democratisation. There is need for more rigorous academic discussion of social media's impact on specific elections.

Social Media and Elections in Africa Volume 2 discusses how elections are increasingly influenced by social media, carefully engaging with the social change processes, attitudes and behaviours of those behind the rapid uptake of social media. Through case studies, the volume further explores the influence of social media on specific electoral processes, actors and societal systems. It considers social media as increasingly important in African elections because it offers a break from failed public media systems in Africa that have been far from representative of the views of the majority. Many have lacked a voice and those connected while able to modify, redistribute or spread messages often have not been listened to by those in power. The chapters in this volume highlight some of the problems, risks and setbacks with the role of social media in elections. Marginalised interest groups such as youths and women continue to face discrimination. In Sudan it was Alaa Salah, a 22-year-old female engineering and architecture student, who was one of the leaders of Sudan's uprising against long-time former ruler Omar al-Bashir ending his near-30-year reign. The book will especially show how and why women and youths have been at the forefront of protests in Africa. Even though women are the majority in most African countries, there are less women than men in formal employment. Africa is the world's youngest population with about two-thirds aged below 25 and about 40 per cent below the age of 15.

This volume tackles a broad range of themes including how social media deals with marginalised groups in electoral politics, especially women, youths and activists. Building on debates about media and gender it argues that social media facilitates conversation on electoral matters but

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its role depends on the context in which it is applied. In most cases it is perpetuating misrepresentations and stereotypes of women that is common in advertising, television, and newspapers. This became clear in three chapters. Mateveke and Chikafa-Chipiro's chapter engages with how social media's coverage of the 2018 elections in Zimbabwe assumed new dimensions of misogyny directed at Grace Mugabe, wife of Robert Mugabe, at a time when others thought she was being prepared for the presidency. Ncube and Yemurai's chapter analyses selected tweets to establish the treatment of female Zimbabwean politicians on social media during the run-up to the July 2018 elections. The verbal violence and harassment against female politicians online is an attempt to make them submit to the patriarchal gatekeepers of political power. Drawing on representational theories particularly Goffman's work on framing and Gramsci's conceptualisation of hegemony in conjunction with feminist readings of Lara and Chigumadzi, Ncube and Yemurai's chapter concludes that notwithstanding the rampant sexism that female politicians in Zimbabwe have to deal with, both offline and online, they have been able to find and deploy their own agency.

Selnes and Orgeret's chapter also engages with gender issues, specifically dealing with women and election activism in Uganda, using the Pads4Girls Social Media Campaign as a case study. Social media affords a voice to marginalised groups; however, the Pads4Girls campaign clearly showed how social media in Uganda was not taken seriously. Women in politics are perceived as overstepping into the masculine realm of politics and challenging masculine power and dominance, and hence they are criticised by both men and women. It is not enough to have a voice as in all cases women were maligned and objectified in social media, putting paid to the often taken for granted notion that social media has an automatic emancipatory potential in society.

Africa's population has close to 600 million youths who arguably have no adequate political representation. At election time the youth are often involved in campaigns and other forms of activism but getting a voice through social media has not increased their access to political power and resources. Malila and Pela's chapter documents the ways in which youths in South Africa actively engage with political party messages using the case of students at Rhodes University during the 2016 elections. She found that youths are highly critical of what they engage with online. However, Malila discovers failure by political parties to harness social media to relate to students. This caused apathy. Ndlela's chapter similarly discusses youth's

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participation in electoral politics, identifying what he considers inequalities in the emerging digital public sphere in Kenya. Contrary to utopian claims of emancipatory claims of being digital, in Kenya the new technologies are resulting in a new digital divide.

In contexts lacking press freedom, social media has provided a counter power to media capture. Activists have used social media to mobilise and speak truth to power. The emerging digital dialogue, as argued by Benecke and Verwey in their chapter, even though it is virtual, provides political protesters with opportunities to influence more diverse groups, increase their resistance of normative hierarchies and improve quality of participation from like-minded citizens. This became clear from their example of the Alex Total Shutdown movement (ATS) that started in April 2019 when residents of Alexandra Township in Gauteng, South Africa, protested for better service delivery just before the national elections in that country. In Algeria, as discussed by Zaghlami in his chapter, activists have similarly used social media to push for constitutional change. Algerian activists use social media in ways that bypass mainstream media, offering platforms and spaces for activists to speak out and mobile with increased momentum from February 2019. However, digital dialogue has also generated hate speech as is shown in the chapter by Ogbonna and Okafo in which they examine the extent to which *The Punch* and *The Guardian* online/published newspapers cover hate speeches in Nigeria. A content analysis research method was used with purposive sampling of *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers online/published editions from January to June 2018. The findings show inadequate coverage of hate speech, (only 23 issues from 360 editions based on the published edition), even though most of the reportage on the issue is of the hard news genre. Mukhudwana's chapter engages with Twitter accounts of selected political leaders in South Africa during the #ZumaMustFall campaign. She investigates the extent to which Twitter is implicated in claims of *echo-chambers*, *homophily* and *populism*. The findings are mixed including how there is diversity of political opinions and alternative forms of political deliberation. Uzuegbunam's chapter engages with popular cultural discourses during Nigeria's 2015 General Elections, analysing how social media memes and other visuals were deployed by activists to ridicule and lampoon those abusing power. The research also examines influence of social media cultures on people's opinions regarding the electoral process. Tyali and Mukhudwana's chapter provides a reception analysis of social media political advertising in South Africa. The case studies

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demonstrate the perceived value of social media as an alternative sphere platform for censored political information and content.

Altogether, the contributors to the book provide nuanced analyses of evidence of how social media is influencing electoral processes in Africa, providing opportunities as well as challenges. The book provides a compelling case for youths and women as an unignorable category for consideration in the new digital public communication in Africa. It contributes to work on the role of new technologies in the African democratisation process, offering both optimistic and worrying accounts about the role of social media.

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CHAPTER 2

Misogyny, Social Media and Electoral Democracy in Zimbabwe's 2018 Elections

Pauline Mateveke and Rosemary Chikafa-Chipiro

Introduction

Social media has to a great extent been hailed as a platform for democratic expression that is representative of new media technologies as ideal tools for modern democratic societies. Studies have shown how social media has opened up additional, if not alternative spaces for public deliberation by way of extension of the Habermasian public sphere and providing a multimedia platform for greater democratic participation, inclusion and expression (Bruns & Highfield, 2016; Essoungou, 2010). Other studies have defined Social Network Sites (SNSs) as facilitating citizen and democratic networking (Loader & Mercea, 2011). Most of the literature reflects that even political parties, their respective leaders and civic organisations have since harnessed social media for their political ends, campaigning in particular (Enli & Skorgerbo, 2013; Ndlela, 2015).

In the African media and political landscape, it would seem that democratic expression on social media is possible, more so with revolutionary

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changes as demonstrated by the Arab Spring. Kenya and Ghana have notably gained some successes in the deployment of social media in their electoral processes (Dzisah, 2018; Ndlela, 2015). Zimbabwe has also registered some success in garnering international support through drawing international attention to the human rights abuses of the Mugabe regime on social media which resulted in the negotiated formation of a Government of National Unity (GNU) after the 2008 disputed elections (Mhiripiri & Mutsvairo, 2013). Sabao and Chikara (2018) also note the significance of the #thisflag and #tajamuka social media movements in Zimbabwe which saw people demonstrate in a 'shutdown' of the country. Nonetheless, studies and realities on the ground reveal that for some nations like Zimbabwe, there are caveats to the full realisation of the democratic appeal of social media in as far as national security measures are concerned (Matingwina, 2018). National legislation has notably curbed much of the enthusiasm for freedom of expression on social media in the past, hence the dampening of expectations of a full social media revolution as that realised by Egypt and Tunisia.

That said, it is particularly interesting and significant that the 2018 electoral landscape presented new dynamics and exhibited great potential for democracy as the leadership of the 'new dispensation' took to social media in populism attempts. For the first time Zimbabwe had a 'social media president' as Emmerson Mnangagwa registered his presence on Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp. Suffice to highlight that because of the ruling party's dominance and monopoly on state broadcasters, social media has been the chief opposition's forte among other alternative media channels. Not to be outdone, the ruling party sought to reach out to the populace. Therefore, social media registered a hive of activity as various parties' candidates vied for people's support on social media. Therein emerged varying dynamics to campaign and populism processes that set the path for democratic engagement.

However, as this study seeks to argue, the prospect for a democratic electoral process and engagement was endangered by multiple factors, one of which being the misogyny that accompanied the treatment of and responses to the female electorate in the 2018 elections. As we underscore the fact that equal participation by all citizens in a country is the hallmark of democracy and human rights, we argue that the gendered political landscape flouted the female electorate's right to freely and equally participate in the 2018 harmonised elections in Zimbabwe. Furthermore, contrary to the discursive and democratic space that social media was expected

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to be, social media became the berth for reinforcement of mediated gendered narratives and discourses in Zimbabwean society. More so, given the imminence of the 'graceless' and 'disgraceful' fall of Robert Mugabe whose forced resignation was blamed on his ambitious wife and the subsequent elections, we argue that the disgrace narrative exacerbated the plight of the female candidates who participated in the elections, particularly the two prominent female presidential candidates, Joice Mujuru and Thokozani Khuphe. Mugabe's fall came through the instigation of the military in what was thought to be a coup in November 2017. The operation by the military which was termed 'Operation Restore Legacy' saw the installation of a new president, Emmerson Mnangagwa, in a regime that was soon termed a 'new dispensation' as it represented the end of Mugabe's 37-year reign. Also caught up in the gendered quagmire of Zimbabwean politics was the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) Chairperson, Priscilla Chigumba.

In the study, we employ social construction theory (Berger & Luckman, 1966) and qualitative content analysis to interrogate how the disgrace narrative was reinforced and deployed on social media, Twitter in particular. Twitter was selected for the study because it is home to the purveyors of gender—that is, the news media, the public and the candidates (McGregor & Mourao, 2016: 3). In view of the long-standing biases towards women in the Zimbabwean political landscape we argue that the convergence of the voices of the news media, the public and the candidates played on socially constructed realities of gender. As opposed to notions of alternative media as critical media (Mano & Mukhango, 2016), we argue that when it came to comments on women politicians on Twitter, the platform was used to reinforce rather than to subvert other mediated face-to-face modes of engagement (Mare, 2018: 92). We do not deny social media's potential to facilitate more participative democracy, especially considering that the opposition parties effected their campaigns on social media. However, where gender is concerned there is a need to critique the balance of communications because more often than not some models of deliberative democracy privilege rational communication that may favour some races or genders over others (Paterman, 1989).

The researchers selected a corpus of tweets on the three women. The tweets consisted of comments by followers of the women on their posts and on popular tweeters who are well known for political commentary and their followers' responses. The tweets were read and grouped according to themes. The content of the selected tweets was thematically analysed. This

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provided us with a lot of electoral commentary which we felt would adequately characterise the electoral landscape on social media. Moreover, other social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp carried the same information as it was disseminated across all SNSs.

The Zimbabwean Electoral Landscape and the 2018 Elections

Over the years, the Zimbabwean landscape has been turbulent and punctuated by political violence in instances that marked the electoral landscape as undemocratic (Masunungure, 2014). The country has thus been characterised as both authoritarian and democratic (Ronning & Kupe, 2001). The country has been led by the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) since independence and had only a little change in 2008 which was marked by disputed elections that saw the country go into a Government of National Unity (GNU) with the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). In addition to the violence that has pervaded elections there have been disputes as to the credibility of the elections and the results. The 2013 elections were thought to be relatively peaceful although there were disputes on constitutional reforms, the election date which the then president Robert Mugabe announced without due consultations and accusations by MDC factions of ZANU-PF having rigged the elections (Mare, 2018; Raftopoulous, 2013; Zamchiya, 2013).

The year 2018 heralded a new era as the long-time president Robert Mugabe was forced to resign. Mugabe's removal has been represented as a culmination of the democratic will of the people because the 'coup' was particularly characterised by unity of purpose between the populace, the army and the diverse leadership of political parties in the country including ZANU-PF, Movement for Democratic Change-Tsvangirai *faction* (MDC-T) and Joice Mujuru's National People's Party (NPP). Once Emmerson Mnangagwa was installed as the country's president expectations for democratic engagement and participation rose with the pronouncement of free and fair elections that would take place in 2018. However, the composition of the 'new dispensation', particularly the dominance of the army in the party structures, raised concerns that the country was under a new regime characterised by continuity of the deposed regime's tactics. Thus, the image of a militarised party state subsisted.

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Nevertheless, the opposition parties' hopes were not quashed as the president assured the nation and international community that his was a democratic dispensation keen on socio-political and economic re-engagement. Hence, Zimbabwe went towards the elections in a 'free and fair' landscape which presented opportunities for equal participation, inclusion and freedom of expression.

Social media reflected the vibrant levels of engagement at play as party candidates and the public engaged in robust political discussions. There was a semblance of the morphing of citizen journalism (Goode, 2009) and citizen-initiated campaigning (CIC) (Gibson, 2015). Citizen journalism had notably played a significant role in shaping the boundaries of political interaction and resistance in the 2008 and 2013 elections (Mujere & Mwatwara, 2016; Sabao & Chikara, 2018). Citizen participation in the 2018 elections arguably presented a new dynamic as citizens disseminated news and information in ways that complemented their respective parties' campaign discourses. Social media communications were filled with current news including photo and video sharing, commentary on live events (especially at campaign venues) and a lot of reposting and tagging across multiple social media platforms.

Studies on Zimbabwe and alternative media have shown that local popular culture has harnessed diverse platforms for alternative expression in the face of a restrictive political landscape (Mano, 2007; Willems, 2011a, 2011b). Wendy Willems (2011a, 2011b) and Mano (2007) view Zimbabwean popular cultural expression in jokes and cartoons, and music, respectively, as alternative journalism that to some extent fights back by defying government monopolisation of the public sphere and by mocking the powerful or the system. However, in the context of social media commentary on Zimbabwean female politicians, the 'alternative' voices on social media reflected not only how popular cultural dynamics open up the public sphere but also how they can, in some instances, purvey the reflective role of the media. Ultimately, we argue that where gender issues in Zimbabwe are concerned, we cannot ignore that media texts, alternative or mainstream, are "part and parcel of broader social and cultural discourses" (Willems, 2011b: 130). In essence, the emancipatory and democratic role of alternative media in the Zimbabwean electoral landscape was dampened by popularised misogynistic narratives that raised warnings against validating participation in alternative media as good in itself (Atton, 2008).

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The Disgrace Narrative: Gender and Elections in Zimbabwe

The last few years of Robert Mugabe's 37-year reign in Zimbabwe have of late been referred to as Zimbabwe's disgrace as a way of linking the country's demise to the role played by the then first lady Grace Mugabe. What we call the disgrace narrative are the discourses that were used to resist and reject Grace's apparent rise to power. We posit that this narrative is embedded in the misogynic tendencies of a patriarchal Zimbabwean milieu that is wont to reject women's rise to political prominence.

Grace Mugabe's active role in Zimbabwean politics began in 2014 with the 'meet the people' rallies and her becoming the head of the ZANU-PF women's league. This political visibility projected the possibility of her being her husband's intended successor amidst the growing factionalism in ZANU-PF. Her rise to prominence sent an alarm in the populace as she orchestrated the ouster of the then Vice President Joice Mujuru. Her involvement in Joice Mujuru's expulsion from the party and her dismissal from the vice presidency were only the beginning of many expulsions of the same nature, the most conflictual one being the dismissal of the then second Vice President Emmerson Dambudzo Mnangagwa. Grace Mugabe proved to be a threat in the ruling party structures for a number of reasons including the fact that she had no liberation war experience, the historical memory of which the ruling party thrived on. Grace and her G40 faction, which was made up of a younger generation of politicians with no liberation war history, threatened the autonomy of the party. Nonetheless, this perhaps was the least of it because more contention stemmed out of her being a woman. Therefore, before using force through the 'coup' to remove her from her new-found power the nation formulated a gendered narrative to quell her ambitions.

The disgrace narrative is a narrative constructed around "myths that have been accepted as normal, which are completely at odds with the moral foundations of a democratic society" (Magaisa, 2017). The myths were used to tarnish her person based on her apparent refusal to be confined to gendered societal roles. Through the power she wielded in the party, to put it in Mudiwa's words, she had "intensified castration anxiety" and unceremoniously deposed the phallus (Mudiwa, 2017). She was subjected to labels that characterised her as a wanton, deranged and morally decadent woman. It is generally agreed upon that Grace Mugabe was far from graceful in her speeches and played to the gallery in her speech

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deliveries; it is the contention in this chapter that she became the perfect excuse for the misogynistic dressing down of womanhood that was not only entrenched in the society but that would also affect future women leaders who want to be involved in national politics. Grace fit into the 'Marujata' and 'Georgina' Zimbabwean folk narratives of 'outspoken and unbridled womanhood'. Marujata is an archetype of a loud, outspoken, mad and quarrelsome woman while Georgina is the archetype of an overtly independent, loose and unbridled womanhood (Chitando, 2018). This is a typical womanhood that would of necessity pose a challenge to patriarchal logic. Grace, with her history of questionable moral standing mainly due to her illicit affair with Mugabe during his marriage to Sally, was labelled a whore. The whore label was carried forward to her casualness with ZANU-PF males with whom she was accused of having sexual relations. She was accused of having an insatiable sexual appetite due to her assumed sexual deprivation since her husband was too old to be fulfilling conjugal rights. This characterisation is the classic narrative of the "sexualisation of women in Zimbabwean politics" (Magaisa, 2017). The features of this narrative are the representation of sex as a tool for domination, control and discipline employed against women in politics (Magaisa, 2017). The assumption was that Grace would not be so mad and unruly if she had a man to fulfil her sexual appetite and thereby quieten or soften her. This kind of narrative plays on the patriarchy's need to silence women and calls to mind the Kenyan mytho-political image of Wangu wa Makeri, the powerful warrior who once ruled the Gikuyu. Her overthrow was instituted through a male plot to impregnate all the members of the women's council simultaneously in an 'implicit rape' that saw the women being ousted through a 'noble coup d'etat' nine months later (Mwangi, 2013). Ultimately, such narratives are circulated and re-narrated as cultural 'knowledge', thus reinscribing alleged contradictions about women's bodies, power and political possibility (Mwangi, 2013). The videos and memes of Grace's speeches and public appearances that circulated on social media inevitably became inscribed in public memory as a mark of the illegitimacy and perversion of women's political power. Grace's illegitimacy was voiced through the then leader of the war veterans association Jabulani Sibanda's words that "power is not sexually transmitted".

The climax of Grace Mugabe's power, her orchestration of Mnangagwa's expulsion, his subsequent short exile and the 'coup' that followed represented the disciplining of womanhood and restoration of patriarchal order. In his paper, Lyton Ncube (2018) characterised it in the vulgar sexual

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idiom of "he who f***s last f***s the hardest" that was inscribed under a WhatsApp viral meme of Constantine Chiwenga (the army general who was behind the military removal of Robert Mugabe) having sexual intercourse with Grace Mugabe. The meme represented the final sexual-cum-political discipline of Grace Mugabe by the 'virile' and masculine army chief who was the hero of the 'coup' as he saved not only the historical memory of the liberation struggle and the ruling party but the deposed phallus.

In his assessment of the complex condition of the postcolony, Achille Mbembe (2001) contends that the postcolonial state creates, through administrative practices, its own world of meanings which becomes some sort of 'master code'. This code is entrenched into the people's consciousness so much that it ends up governing the logics that underlie all other meanings within that society. For Mbembe, the world of meanings created by the said master code is integrated into the period's consciousness and in the process becomes part of the people's common sense. In view of the 'disgrace' narrative and conversing with Mbembe's views, we argue that misogyny and negative attitudes towards the political leadership of women are part of contemporary Zimbabwe's master code and have been embedded into the Zimbabwean people's common sense. This is why, as will be illustrated in the following section, even though Grace Mugabe was absent from the 2018 elections arena, the 'disgrace' ghost continued to haunt the women taking part in these elections.

Findings and Discussion

The sample consists of purposively selected tweets by and about Thokozani Khupe, Joice Mujuru and Priscilla Chigumba. The tweets were posted during election time. Although it is a difficult period to demarcate, the researchers are guided by Madhuku (2018), who suggests that 'during elections' is a period when election-related activities—campaigns, voter registration and candidate selection—are highlighted. Thus, the tweets that are selected for analysis were posted from August 2017 to 30 July 2018 when the Zimbabwe harmonised elections were conducted. A qualitative content analysis of the selected tweets not only attests to the ubiquitous influence of social media, it also confirms our hypothesis that misogyny and sexism informed the dominant narratives about Khupe, Mujuru and Chigumba. Social media became the primary contact point between Zimbabwean politicians and the general population. In relation

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to the three women under study (particularly Khupe and Chigumba), the 'disgrace' narrative was constantly assigned to them and placed their political activities outside the enclave of 'respectability'. To appreciate the various elements of 'disgrace' that were assigned to them, the findings are identified and discussed through four minimally organised and interrelated themes that reveal the intersections of gender, social media and electoral democracy. The themes, which are family status, physical appearance vis-à-vis political competency, the political public vis-à-vis the domestic private, misogyny and cyber violence against women, are discussed in the following sections.

Family Status

Generally, for women, being involved in politics is not an easy task; one's gender is continually entangled with issues of power and identity and this has been reflected in the struggles faced by Khupe, Mujuru and Chigumba. Comments on Twitter reveal society's anxiety about women's political participation and this anxiety seems to emanate from a shifting and changing context whereby, through Twitter, women have control over the political information that they disseminate to their followers. The anxiety also has to do with the impulse to control women and to keep them in check. One of the mechanisms of keeping them in check is the constant reference to and reminder of the status of their families. For Thokozani Khupe and Priscilla Chigumba in particular, the general comments about their family status relate to their marital status and they receive exacting comments for their 'unmarried' status. For example, during Khupe's struggles with Nelson Chamisa for the MDC-T leadership, she took to Twitter (13/04/18) indicating her willingness and resoluteness to stand by the MDC-T founding values and principles of democracy. Most of the responses to her post veered from a meaningful engagement with her political views. Instead, there is an incessant need to get her completely out of the political picture with some indicating that she must go and get married. In a similar manner, when the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, ZEC, on Twitter @ZECzim posted a picture of Priscilla Chigumba casting her vote (30/07/18), the responding comments to the post generally ignore the significance of the ZEC chairperson setting an example on exercising one's right and responsibility to voting. Instead, most of the comments allude to her unmarried status and allegations of a sexual affair

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with a prominent government minister. For example, Chief Neshangwe @ ctmafukidze responds:

> *Ko adii kuenda kwadaddy nhai*? (why did she not go and vote at her man's constituency?)

Another example is a response by Patience Ncube @PatienceNcube4 reads:

> *Aizve nemahure anotobvumidzwa kuvhota*? (Really!!!Bitches are allowed to vote?)

Such comments are deeply entrenched within hegemonic structures of patriarchy that aim to contain and subdue women's political aspirations and activities by constantly making reference to the setup of their families and their personal lives. Khupe and Chigumba appear to be social outcasts because a woman's status and influence on society seem to go hand in hand with the setup of their family. It seems their lack of a societally approved family status is a 'disgrace' that is overstated at the expense of their political undertakings. The family, as the primary producer of gender norms, is thus constantly made reference to, so as to understate the influence of Khupe and Chigumba as adequate political players.

In contrast, Joice Mujuru seems to have more respect and sympathy from her followers. This respect is best explained by the fact that she was married to Solomon Mujuru who was a former freedom fighter, a powerful liberation war figure and a former commander of Zimbabwe's armed forces. Some kind of clandestine power is attributed to her due to her connection to Solomon Mujuru and her status as a former freedom fighter, a mother and now a widow. When on 9 August 2017, Joice Mujuru @ JTRMujuru informed her followers about the launch of her political party, the National People's Party, she mostly received supportive responses with some referring to her as "*gandanga rine chivindi*" (a fearless guerrilla soldier) or "*Amai*" (Mother). The responses to Mujuru's Tweet privilege ideas about nation and nationhood and in the process they legitimise discourses that silence the voices of women like Khupe who did not take part in the national liberation movement. This is reminiscent of similar 'disgrace' narratives previously levelled against Grace Mugabe who had to be constantly reminded that she did not take part in the liberation war and thus had no say on the direction and future of Zimbabwe. The larger national and social agenda of hegemonic control over women has thus

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been manipulated through nationalistic discourses and permeates the comments on Twitter. So, irrespective of the male-oriented structure of society, Mujuru enjoys some sort of freedom in her current political endeavours, but this freedom seems to be on a leash; it is only granted when she continues to present a 'nationalist' and 'motherly' persona. The fact that women's involvement in politics is controlled and dictated by patriarchal agendas was made clear when in the year 2014 Mujuru was ousted from the ZANU-PF political party and the Zimbabwean government. There were attempts to build a 'motherly' persona around Grace Mugabe through the infamous "Munhu wese kuna Amai" (Everyone for Mother) slogan that was used to denigrate Joice Mujuru and her contributions to the liberation war. What becomes clear is the point that, for women in politics, power is opportunistically afforded to them as long as it does not threaten the overriding male political power.

Physical Appearance vis-à-vis Political Competency

One of the ways in which the 'disgrace' narrative has been deployed during the 2018 'harmonised' elections relates to physical appearance. One's physical appearance is manipulated callously so as to instil a heightened level of bodily consciousness. Physical appearance becomes a crucial site of political contestation. Twitter, as a digital social platform, is used to reflect on gender realities within political production and consumption. Women and men involved in politics appear to face very different cultural, social, institutional, moral, political and economic constraints. These constraints limit female politicians vying for a higher political position the potential to own their 'voice'. Accordingly, women who somehow make it into the political arena come with the baggage of being gendered as a woman and in a patriarchal world, politics is a site of reason, a trait which women politicians are presumed to be lacking. Consequently, this disregard for their political competency usually leads to comments that pay attention to issues such as their physical appearance. For example, when ZEC @ ZECZim announced Justice Priscilla Chigumba as the new ZEC chairperson on 1 February 2018, one of the comments by Matemai Nzou @ ThamuTawenga read:

> *Apa Guvheya ari kugaya kuti obvunza seyi mafuta eku bleacher*
> (Right now Guvheya is wondering how to ask her about her skin bleaching lotion)

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Similarly Raw_Mania @Raw_263 says:

> On behalf of Zimbabwean men … we are fully behind this decision!!! We do not know her qualifications but *dai tirisuwo taingochuza iyeyu uyu* (but even if it were us, we would still have chosen this one)

Most comments that relate to Chigumba on Twitter tend to focus on her light-skinned complexion and how 'pretty' she is. She is often presented as an object of adoration, physically beautiful and even as a sexual toy for men. There seems to be a deep-seated need to restrict Chigumba's role to that of a beautiful 'mistress' while making invisible her central role as ZEC chairperson. This was taken to newer heights when on 20 July 2018 Edmund Kudzayi @EdmundKudzayi claimed in several Twitter posts Priscilla Chigumba's sexual relationship with a senior member of the ruling party. Edmund Kudzayi claimed that the revelation was meant to show that Chigumba is compromised as ZEC chairperson and should resign from her post. However, the responses to Kudzayi's posts also reveal another dimension beyond Chigumba's compromised status. Moral discourses characterise the comments about Chigumba's affair and it seems as if her 'lack of morals' is even more pertinent than the possibility of her being compromised as ZEC chairperson.

Thokozani Khupe has also not fared better; she is constantly referred to as *mbuya iyi* (this old woman) while Joice Mujuru has been told to "get rid of *vhudzijena* (white hair) in this day and age of hair extensions". The derogatory remarks about the women's physical appearance are pitted against their political competency and the result is that the political competency is eclipsed by the focus on how they look. Women are pressured to look a certain way: they have to be younger and 'pretty' failure of which they are condemned as old and politically useless like Khupe. However, to be younger and pretty like Chigumba also means that they lack the brains to be respectable and politically competent. Given this 'no-win situation' we make the argument that it has nothing to do with their looks or their competency; it is all centred on the fact that they are women. There is inherent sexism on Twitter, which is a reflection of the sexism in society. Twitter becomes a good measure of societal sexism but the perceived safety of ambiguity afforded by Twitter accounts makes society even more sexist.

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The Political Public Versus the Domestic Private

Entering into the political domain entails that women are shifting away from a role that confined them to the private sphere. However, Zimbabwean women in politics occupy a space where the vast and largely problematic complexities of gender are revealed and contested. The major issue stems from their presumed subordinate position and this issue is consistently confirmed in the various Twitter comments on Mujuru's, Khupe's and Chigumba's involvement in politics. In the offline world, structures of women's subordination in both the domestic and the social spheres are negotiated, disputed and transformed but these structures continue to permeate the woman's presence on digital social networks. Public perceptions of women in politics are unforgivingly negative because society resists their legitimacy as political players. The resistance usually comes in the form of intimidating and hostile sexist remarks. If a woman exists outside the restricted social areas in the home to enter public spaces such as politics, she is likely to be labelled a 'whore' or 'loose' and she is often seen as sexually available to all men as opposed to marked categories of 'mother', 'wife' or 'sister' whose existence in society is bound by a kinship relationship that brings with it social and cultural expectations and values. The following comments were levelled at Chigumba when she cast her vote on 30 July 2018. Demetria Ziwewe @DemiZiwewe responds:

> *Hure raWinston ravhota iro*
> (Winston's bitch has voted)

Knowledge Zidya @zidya89 also says:

> *Imbwa iyo … unoscirwa naED*
> (Bitch … ED is f@#%ing you)

Another example of the sexist comments comes from Fa Matiz @famatiz who says:

> *Vakakotama here mother Chigumba?*
> (Is mother Chigumba bending over?)

On 13 April 2018, Dr Thokozani Khupe @DrThoko_Khupe on Twitter received the following comments upon announcing her decision not to step down for Nelson Chamisa as MDC-T president:

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Pathetic (DJ @Freshnawell1)
Bvapo hure iwe Get away b%*#! (Sir Joshua @clivephiri)
Wakutopenga iwe You are now crazy (Tinashe Chakanetsa @TinasheChakanetsa)

Generally, Zimbabwean women are meant to be socially invisible and their status and voice in the public sphere mediated. They are meant to influence public life only indirectly. Digital social media such as Twitter now affords them the opportunity to directly engage with and even influence public life. However, an analysis of Zimbabwe's 2018 elections through Twitter posts shows that men continue to impose the socially constructed public versus private space upon the woman. During the 2018 general elections, women politicians were seen to assume an even more precarious position because their public aspirations were constantly pitted against societal expectations of what a woman can or cannot do. For Thokozani Khupe, the supporters of her rival in the MDC-T party, Nelson Chamisa, project hostile misogyny and harbour overtly antagonistic views about her prospects. There is a sense in which they view her as a 'disgraceful' liability to the cause of opposition politics. Nelson Chamisa becomes the asset who should run for office. On 8 March 2018 when Dr Thokozani Khupe @DrThoko_Khupe expressed the need to have women in politics she was labelled a "confused mad woman", "a joke" and "the second most hated woman in Zimbabwe after Grace Mugabe". Here, the 'disgrace' narrative is made clear. It is a 'disgrace' that she, a woman, would dare to think that she has a shot at being president of the country. Social media discourses attest to the intersections of gender and politics but these intersections frame the woman political subject in a pervasive manner. It is pervasive because the women are plagued by a patriarchal system that threatens to denigrate and devalue their public political aspirations and because "the postcolony is a world of anxious virility" (Mbembe, 2001: 110), there is a sense in which women's political aspirations threaten male authority.

There is an incessant need to continually impose the private domestic space upon women. For example, the comments on Twitter suggest that Khupe does not make a better political leader than Nelson Chamisa because she is a woman. There is a sense in which the comments about Khupe's political aspirations associate 'maleness' represented by Nelson Chamisa with superiority and 'femaleness' with inferiority. This is attested to by comments made in response to @DrThoko_Khupe's post on 21 February 2018 in which she questions the use of violence to solicit

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submission from women political aspirants. Some of the responses to Khupe's tweet read as follows:

> *Khupe dzikama,* sit down and humble yourself (Redemptor @ReedzPM)
>
> Am sorry chef but your purpose is to be vice to Chamisa (Kalani @tkausiyo)
>
> Which God are you talking about? Because the one I know never created man and female equal? (Joshua Generation @GMupanedende)
>
> God created man and woman in his image but gave them different social roles (James Junior Matongo @brojames_james)
>
> How can you be equal when you were made from Adam's rib? (Munya @ MunyaMadzingwa)

From these comments two important issues are raised. The first issue has to do with the ways in which politics and religion intermesh in intricate ways and they collude in silencing the woman political aspirant's voice. Christian religious discourses are used in these comments so as to socially construct the roles, behaviour, activities and attributes that distinguish between men and women, in the process advancing the subordination of women. The second issue has to do with the patriarchal consciousness that pervades Zimbabwean public opinion and culture and how it is directed towards control. Consequently, the tension between the public space and the domestic space affects Khupe's political aspirations. The comments reiterate the point that women who try to move freely as politicians into the public sphere beyond the accepted domestic domain are constantly challenged by men and the governing concepts of gender.

Women who are assertive and dare to navigate the political landscape without making concessions with the patriarchal expectations are found threatening. For example, Chigumba is constantly referred to as 'arrogant' for speaking back to those who attack her and for having sound knowledge of the law. The reference to Chigumba's 'arrogance' must be understood in terms of men's unwillingness to support women who yield some form of power. Chigumba's outspokenness can be perceived as a threat to masculinity and a challenge to the position of men in society. The Twitter comments are thus used to segregate women in politics and to discount their opinions as irrelevant. It seems as if politics has not exactly

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been sanctioned as 'real' work for women. Instead, there seems to be the idea that women can only get to a certain point within politics, as helpers or pawns in the games of male politicians. When on 24 August 2018, political commentator mmatigari @matigary expressed his sympathies with the way Priscilla Chigumba's name was dragged in the mud during the elections, some of the responding comments suggest that she was being used by the ruling ZANU-PF political party so as to maintain its hold on power. Masirande @Masirande1's response accuses Chigumba of having done a dirty job of defrauding Zimbabweans in the election. iQuant @ masango1 similarly expresses the notion that Chigumba helped the "coup plotters" to win the election.

This can be juxtaposed to Thokozani Khupe's run for presidency which was generally perceived as a ZANU-PF agenda to weaken the opposition MDC-A. Labels such as 'ZANU-PF agent' were constantly thrown on Khupe and some were convinced that she was bought by ZANU-PF to destroy its major opposition party.

Joice Mujuru, on the other hand, has not managed to transcend the shadow of her late husband who, people suggest, opened the door to her political career as if she did not take part in the liberation struggle in her own right. Because politics has always been associated with male ambition, women's participation is not appreciated for its transformative possibilities. Women are wholly accepted within this space only as support systems for male politicians, for example, as wives of political leaders like Emmerson Mnangagwa's wife Auxillia, who had to drop her own political ambitions to take on her role as first lady and as a support system for her husband. The Twitter comments therefore demonstrate this need to shove women into a prescribed box which is secondary to that of men.

Misogyny and Cyber Violence Against Women

The history of elections in Zimbabwe has been marked by intolerance, violence and dispute (Mandaza, 2018). Given this 'violent' history of elections that he alludes to, Mandaza argues that the 2018 general elections in Zimbabwe will most likely not be free of violence. Although Mandaza specifically focuses on physical violence emanating from differences in political ideologies, his sentiments have been proven true when it comes to the participation of women in the 2018 elections. A closer analysis of comments on Twitter reveals an even more disconcerting kind of violence that is levelled at political players particularly Chigumba and Khupe. In his

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presentation on political violence during elections, Mhandara (2018, np) argues that electoral violence can take different forms. There is direct physical violence which leaves visible marks but there is also indirect emotional violence which, although it does not leave visible marks, is even more destructive because of the ways in which it wreaks havoc with a people's psyche. What we have seen happening on Twitter reflects the kind of indirect violence Mhandara refers to. There seems to be a widespread increase in verbal violence against women in politics and insults and obscene name-calling are typical characteristics of this violence. Offensive labels such as 'witch', 'bitch', 'pathetic', 'dumb' have often been used to describe these women. The reckless use of such offensive labels illustrates Mbembe's analogy of the postcolonial aesthetics of vulgarity whereby the postcolony neither minces nor spares its words (2001: 108). Although social media is a key network for politicians to dialogue meaningfully with the people and offers tools that can help women achieve greater political parity, it seems as if cultural biases continue to haunt women into the virtual spaces and these cultural biases often turn violent and offensive. Although men in politics are not free from harsh criticism, women in politics tend to receive harsher criticism because gender codes dictate that a woman must uphold national culture and values. For example, although Mujuru largely receives positive comments, she has also received scathing remarks for raising 'promiscuous' daughters. Electoral violence became physical when Thokozani Khupe was accosted by some supporters of the MDC-Alliance leader Nelson Chamisa during the funeral of Morgan Tsvangirai. The discussion on Twitter about this incident reveals an unsympathetic society (see Linda T. Masarira-Kaingidza on Twitter, @ lilomatic 6/3/18). The discussion and the responses to Masarira's concerns about the violence instigated against Khupe show that there is a sense in which the blame is shifted from those who attacked Khupe and Khupe is blamed for bringing the violence upon herself because of the way she challenges male authority. These attitudes reinforce the subjugation of women, who somehow end up being scapegoats. This is unfortunate to a democratic electoral process because violence in all its facets affects elections and yet elections are intrinsic to democracy. The means used by politicians and voters have a bearing on the outcome. Violence undermines electoral results and democracy as well as national cohesion. In fact, the only effect of violence is upheaval.

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Implications of the 'Disgrace' Narrative and Women's Participation in Politics

The 'disgrace' narrative is steeped within misogynistic attitudes that are aimed at reinforcing traditional gender roles that keep women submissive. The sexism that comes with these attitudes poses as a stumbling block to women because they may fail to transcend stereotypes that undermine their potential within the political realm. Although the digital age which is characterised by the proliferation of social networking sites has to a large extent afforded women the opportunity to take part in the election process, there is still a huge disparity between men and women in politics. One of the major explanations for this disparity is that cultural attitudes in the offline space continue to hound women's efforts in the online world. This disparity is aptly explained by Jessie Majome's analogy of "unfree, unfair and incredible" elections in Zimbabwe. Majome insists that elections in Zimbabwe continue to be characteristically unfair because there is no gender equality in the electoral process. Thus, lack of 'representativity' and 'proportionality' in elections are the major by-products of the misogynistic attitudes revealed on Twitter. It becomes difficult for women in Zimbabwe to freely make choices about elections (both as electorate and as voters) because their choice is at most times determined by the societal attitudes about the role they should take in this process. Because of the societal attitudes that are driven by the need to control and subdue, women have found the business of politics strenuous both socially and emotionally and consequently they fail to move forward. This failure to move forward may be because the societal attitudes negatively affect their chances for success in the run for elections; it may also be women become reluctant to get into the electoral race.

Concluding Remarks

It cannot be overstated that women and men should have equal and fair participation in political debate and activities during elections; this equality and fairness is the hallmark of democracy. During Zimbabwe's 2018 elections, the women involved in the elections and those running for the presidential elections were constantly reminded of their gender and the discussions on Twitter almost always focused on their gender instead of their policies. The use of pseudonyms on Twitter made it difficult to ascertain the gender of those making these comments. A snapshot view of the

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profile pictures and some names suggests that both men and women have negative views of women in politics. The posts by and about these women as well as the public comments generally portrayed the women in a biased manner. Stereotyping became the engine behind the discrimination of these women. This became detrimental to the fairness of the electoral process and influence on electoral gender balance.

Elsewhere, it has been argued that gender stereotypes alone may not necessarily have a direct impact on a woman candidate's winning or losing elections. A study by Kathleen Dolan (2014) in the US concluded that although voters rely on gender stereotypes to evaluate women candidates' suitability for office, there was little in the way of available data to link stereotypes to voter decision-making. Thus, they sought to make stereotypes part of a more complete model of attitudinal and behavioural reactions to women candidates and weigh the impact of stereotypes against competing political influences such as political party, incumbency and other contextual factors (Dolan, 2014: 97). However, the Zimbabwean election scenario hardly leaves room for women candidates to be judged on these other factors. The gendering of the elections and the disgrace narrative and its attendant stereotypes only served to obscure these other factors.

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CHAPTER 3

Women and Election Activism in Uganda: The Pads4Girls Social Media Campaign

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Acronyms

CID	Criminal Investigations Department
DP	Democratic Party
FB	Facebook
FDC	Forum for Democratic Change
MHM	Menstrual Hygiene Management
UN	United Nations

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Introduction

During an election campaign in 2015, President Museveni promised that his government would provide girls of school age with menstrual hygiene materials if re-elected. He was quoted in the newspapers saying that his government would distribute free sanitary towels to girls to prevent them from skipping school.[1] A year later, First Lady Janet Museveni who by then was the Minister of Education announced that the government had no money to provide the pads. Several Ugandans took to social media to vent their displeasure at the lies of the president and politicians. They accused the president of reneging on his campaign promise and also criticised Janet Museveni for being an accomplice in this, despite being a woman and a mother.

One woman's rant in Facebook posts translated into the Pads4Girls campaign to provide free sanitary towels to girls in March 2017. Thus, the campaign[2] was born following the Ugandan government's failure to honour a presidential election campaign promise. The Pads4Girls' campaign was championed by Stella Nyanzi, an academic and research fellow at Makerere University. She formed a voluntary working group to coordinate the campaign. The group, which was made up of 40 volunteers, opened pads collection points and appealed to social media users to contribute to the drive.[3] The campaign, having initially aimed to collect 1 million pads, collected over 10 million pads and reached out to more than 2000 girls (The Observer, 2017). Stella Nyanzi started the Pads4Girls campaign on Facebook to rally women and the citizenry to demand that the government fulfil its election campaign promise of supplying sanitary towels. The campaign aimed to show the leadership of Uganda that menstrual hygiene materials could be supplied if prioritised. Stella Nyanzi used her personal Facebook page to condemn the government's deceit and to publicise the cause. Activities were organised both online and offline, which included press conferences, media appearances and visits to schools in rural Uganda to talk to young people about hygiene and to distribute sanitary towels. Opposition politicians joined the movement, calling on the government to provide the materials promised. The campaign antagonised powerful figures in government and led to Stella Nyanzi's imprisonment.

Social Media in Uganda

Social media has pervaded the social fabric of society and is arguably changing the face of public communication in Uganda. As journalist Daniel Kalinaki (2016) observes, social media is transforming the way

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'audiences engage with information, authorities and institutions of traditional power in Uganda'. Facebook was, at the time of writing, the most widely used social networking website with 2,600,000 users.[4] Despite the small number of users compared to those in more digitally advanced countries, there is no doubt that websites are growing in importance in this East African country (BBC, 2012; Kamp, Messerschmidt, & Rugambwa, 2016).

Social media in Uganda has become an important source of information for users, including professional journalists (Namasinga, 2018). People use social media to share information about government policies, actions, abuse, police brutality and daily societal occurrences (Javuru, 2013, p. 367). Social media provide citizens with the opportunity to converge and to express their views on a range of issues. Government and civil society take to social media to share information, to communicate with the citizenry and to disseminate propaganda. The platforms facilitate conversation between citizens and their leaders, provide government agents and stifled political opposition groups with the opportunity for dialogue, to pass information on to the electorate and for mobilisation. Facebook is an alternative platform for opposition politicians and civil groups with limited access to mainstream media.

Their influence was first highlighted in 2011, when the government asked Internet service providers to shut down social media during the walk-to-work[5] protests (BBC, 2012; Heacock, 2011). The government shut down Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp on the election day, 18 February 2016, and the president's swearing-in on 12 May 2016. The shutdown of social media and the introduction in July 2018 of a levy of US$0.05 (Sh200) for the use of, for example, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and YouTube in Uganda was seen as a means of demobilising political participation and as a blow to the consolidation of democracy in Africa (Anena, 2016; Ojok, 2016).

The use of Internet applications by political candidates as a campaign tool to share manifestos, connect with the electorate and mobilise support in the 2016 presidential elections further emphasised the significance of social media in politics.[6] Social media, according to Ojok (2016), intensified electoral participation in Uganda, with citizens using Facebook and Twitter to campaign for and against candidates. Hashtags such as *#Ugandadecides* and *#UGDebate16* dominated the country's social media sphere, users taking to Facebook, Twitter and WhatsApp to debate the election and politics. Amama Mbabazi, one of the presidential contenders, used YouTube to officially announce his candidature.

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A study of media coverage of the 2016 elections shows that the three main presidential candidates, Yoweri Museveni, Kizza Besigye and Amama Mbabazi, used Twitter in the same way as they used conventional media (ACME, 2016). They used microblogs to spread information to the electorate, rather than as platforms of engagement (ibid.). Little empirical and theoretical research has been carried out into the role of social media in electoral democracy in Uganda, despite their growing importance in politics and elections. Little is, in particular, known about women's involvement via social media in electoral activities in East Africa. The literature on gender, social media and political communication, which is reviewed later, mostly emanates from the US and Europe.

Women in Politics and Elections

Women's involvement in politics in Africa can be described as a slow but improving process (Amundsen & Kayuni, 2016). Women are finding ways to participate in the political life of their countries and there is a noticeable increase in the participation of women in decision-making and in political life in countries such as Rwanda, Burundi and Uganda. Female candidates are, furthermore, contesting and winning elections and hold important positions in governments of those countries (Abdennebi-Abderrahim, 2013). The election of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf in Liberia in 2006 and Joyce Banda in Malawi in 2012 as heads of state is evidence of how much the status of women has improved.

Several countries across Africa are signatories of international charters that seek to achieve gender equality and include women in decision-making processes. Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Malawi and Uganda have put in place measures such as affirmative action to increase women's participation in governance and public life. While this has been partly attributed to power-seeking politicians who seek women's electoral support (Ottemoeller, 1999), the mechanism has improved the status of female participants in politics. In October 2018, Ethiopia's Abiy Ahmed appointed women to half of his government's cabinet, including to the post of Defence Minister. Ethiopia is the second African country, after Rwanda, to have equal gender representation in the cabinet. Women can contest in competitive elections and assume political positions in parliament and government. However, the majority of women remain under-represented and removed from decision-making levels. Their input in electoral and decision-making processes often remains in the hands of

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their male counterparts. Generally, women remain on the margins in politics and elections despite measures to change the status quo. The political playing field is uneven and not conducive to women due to obstacles such as highly competitive electoral systems, poverty, sexism, a culture that undermines women and deeply rooted patriarchal beliefs (Hamandishe, 2018).

Whereas the legal framework does not discriminate against women, their participation in elections as candidates and as commentators on electoral-related issues remains low due to the country's social, economic and cultural structure. Empirical research shows that women in Uganda are marginalised in mainstream media coverage of elections and that female candidates receive the least coverage across all media platforms (ACME, 2016).

Menstruation: Taboo, Hygiene and Political Value

Montgomery in 1974 described menstrual taboos as being 'transcultural in nature, represented along a continuum that ranges from mild uneasiness and distrust of menstrual fluid and menstruating women, and ultimately to complete seclusion during the menstrual period' (1974, pp. 137–138). Menstruation is a universal experience shared by all women. It is, even so, also a globally stigmatised issue, the impact of menstruation on society being seen directly in the educational opportunities, quality of life and professional endeavours of females. Sub-Saharan Africa is home to one of the world's fastest-growing teenage girl populations.

Menstruation is a natural process but issues surrounding it remain poorly prioritised by governments in sub-Saharan Africa (UNESCO, 2014). Findings show that school dropout rates for girls from low-income countries increase when they reach puberty. They also show that girls in low-income settings miss or struggle at school during menstruation, if they are unable to effectively manage their menstrual hygiene (ibid.). This is supported by Boosey, Prestwich, and Deave (2014), who explore menstrual hygiene practices and knowledge of rural state primary school girls in Rukungiri district of Uganda. Good menstrual hygiene management (MHM) requires access to the required resources (e.g. menstrual pads, soap and water), to facilities (e.g. a secluded place to wash and change and an adequate disposal system) and to MHM education. The findings show that menstruation-related absenteeism was high: 61.7% of girls missed school at least once a month and 87.8% had not been able to buy sanitary

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pads on at least one occasion, 61.6% of these because they could not afford them and 34.6% because disposable pads were not available in local shops (Boosey et al., 2014). The researchers found that female teachers also sometimes missed school for menstrual-related reasons (Boosey et al., 2014). Boosey et al. also found that senior female teachers reported that male head teachers rarely allocated enough funding to resources and facilities to help girls manage their menstrual hygiene. It is a lack of knowledge that perpetuates the myths that isolate and shame women during their monthly periods. Drawing attention to the girls and women who do not have access to pads and refusing to let the stigma of periods hold back women is seen to play an important role in the easing of this situation for girls and women. It can also be argued that menstruation is of significance in achieving SDGs (goal 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 and 12). Access to hygienic sanitary towels and educational materials remains a challenge in Uganda. Around 61% of girls in the country miss school every year due to menstrual hygiene, 30% dropping out of school completely (*The Guardian*, 2014).[7] By promising free pads and free education-related items, the then presidential candidate appealed to women who are an influential voting bloc.

Social Media and Political Communication

Research on the interplay between Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and politics highlights the Internet's role in political communication during elections and its use by politicians to communicate with voters (Foot & Schneider, 2006; Stieglitz, Brockmann, & Xuan, 2012). More recent research focuses on social media's relevance in political communication. For Web 2.0 technologies, academic inquiry pays attention to the impact of social media on political participation and civic engagement (Fenton & Barassi, 2011; Xenos, Vromen, & Loader, 2014) and on politicians' use of social media during elections (Graham, Broersma, Hazelhoff, & vant Haar, 2013; Kalsnes, Larsson, & Enli, 2017). Such studies reflect social media as an enabler of the political participation of the citizenry and how it is employed to create a dialogue between voters and aspirants to political office. The studies focus on how political actors and political parties employ social media for political purposes (Stieglitz et al., 2012; Wattal, Schuff, Mandviwalla, & Williams, 2010). There is, therefore, a burgeoning body of literature on the role of social media in elections. The research indicates that social media is an important tool in political communication during election campaigns (Robertson, Vatrapu,

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& Medina, 2010; Towner & Dulio, 2011). Politicians use social media to connect with potential voters and to disseminate information. The research shows Facebook to be a legitimate place for the discussion of political issues. Social media has, without doubt, been integrated into politics and into electioneering in digitally advanced countries. Politicians and ordinary individuals take advantage of the platforms to create and share information, to interact, communicate and mobilise and for the branding and marketing of their ideas.

Social media's impact on politics has also been registered in the Global South. The uprisings that led to the downfall of despotic regimes in Tunisia, Egypt and Libya are partially attributed to social media (Wolfsfeld, Segev, & Sheafer, 2013). Elsewhere in Africa there are indications that social media facilitate citizens' participation in democratic processes and that this is beneficial to politicians and citizens during elections (Dzisah, 2018; Mare, 2018; Onyechi, 2018). These studies reflect sentiments such as those noted by scholars in more digitally and democratically advanced contexts. The studies, however, often hype the impact of ICTs on electoral processes (Mare, 2018). We acknowledge that social media is not an end in itself. As Wolfsfeld et al. (2013) argue, it is imperative to consider the political environment in which the platforms are used, if social media and its impact in, for example, the African context are to be fully comprehended. The impact of the platforms can be realised when certain factors are at play. These factors include high levels of Internet penetration, some degree of democracy, access to information, citizens' digital literacy and a willingness to participate in democratic transition.

Gender, Social Media and Political Behaviour

Gender differences historically exist both in political engagement and online. Bodes (2017) found that these differences are most likely to emerge in the most visible political behaviours. This suggests that women strategically engage in less visible or are less likely to offend political behaviours than men. Findings in the field of social media are, however, more mixed. Some scholars find that men are more likely to express themselves politically on social media (Lutz, Hoffmann, & Meckel, 2014), whereas other research concludes that there is no such difference on social media (Bodes, 2017; Vesnic-Alujevic, 2012).

Vochocova (2016), however, contends that most studies deal with gender merely as a control variable rather than building an entire design

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around it. She argues that such studies typically do not indicate significant differences between men and women in the ways they participate online. Gender aspect of online political participation is a relatively unexplored area. Very little research within this field takes women as the point of departure. There is, at the same time, a worldwide gender-based digital divide in terms of access to and use of online platforms, the proportion of women using the Internet being 12% lower than that of men; this gender gap widens to 32.9% in the least developed countries (Chakravorti, 2017).

As politics increasingly moves online and as online communication rapidly and increasingly becomes a growing force in civic engagement, the gaps in the political field and in social media become, together, particularly important (Bodes, 2017; Rainie, Smith, Scholzman, Brady, & Verba, 2012). Some researchers worry that online political activities might replace offline activities, in so-called slacktivism, in which 'our digital efforts make us feel very useful and important but have zero social impact' (Morozov, 2013). A lot of research, however, suggests that online politics complements offline politics instead of replacing it (Xenos et al., 2014).

The intersection of gender and other factors is an important part of traditional explanations of the 'gender gap' in political participation. Political participation should be studied as a gendered action influenced by the individual's socialisation, access and opportunities, to explain different participation patterns among men and women (Vochocova, 2016). Women are less frequent and less intense users of the Internet, this difference being particularly clear in the way men and women spend their time online. Women tend, in general, to use the Internet for social interaction and relationship maintenance. Men, however, are more likely to search for information, for example, on news, politics, sports and finance (Abraham, Morn, & Vollman, 2010; Li & Kirkup, 2007), echoing a broader pattern of gender differences in communication (Wood & Rhodes, 1992). Some research suggests that there is a possibility that women will abstain from political engagement when they feel at risk of offending or alienating others (Bodes, 2017). Junco (2013) shows how women tend, more frequently, to take part in activities that connect them to others, typically in expressive online activities such as posting, tagging photos and commenting on other's content. Brandtzaeg's (2017) study explored gender disparities in Facebook liking practices that act as expressions of civic engagement, among more than 21.7 million Facebook users in ten countries across Asia, Africa, the Americas and Europe. He found that males were drawn more towards politically and information-oriented liking

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practices than females. The study found, by combining age, gender and location, that young women (13–28 years) in Europe and the Americas are more likely than men to support humanitarian aid and environmental issues on Facebook. This was not, however, evident in Asia and Africa, where men were more active in liking all forms of civic expressions on Facebook. It is important to take into consideration that women, when using the Internet, might face additional hostility. Women around the world report being bombarded by a culture of misogyny online, including aggressive, often sexualised hate speech, direct threats of violence, harassment and revenge porn involving the use of private information to defame them (Web Foundation, 2015).

This chapter, therefore, examines social media's potential to facilitate women's participation in the discussion of election-related issues in Uganda. The Pads4Girls campaign in the aftermath of the 2016 elections serves as a case to study how women used Facebook for civic engagement on an election-related issue. The leading research questions are as follows: How did women use Facebook to address politicians about election promises in the Pads4Girls campaign? Do the Facebook messages contain any direct political recommendations? Do they urge women to vote or become more active citizens?

Methods

There are several ways of measuring political engagement on social media. We used a specific case, the Pads4Girls campaign in Uganda. A case study is an in-depth investigation of a specific situation and is used to narrow down a broad field of research into a more easily researchable topic (Yin, 2009). The Pads4Girls campaign allowed elaboration of gender and online civic engagement in Uganda. Content analysis (Krippendorff, 2012) of Facebook posts and interviewing (Hennink, Hutter, & Bailey, 2011) provided robust findings that strengthen this research's contribution to knowledge about social media's role in electoral processes. Using diverse methods generated useful data and mitigated limitations of relying on one method. We analysed posts between February and March 2017 to obtain more knowledge on how the campaign evolved and how Facebook was used to promote it. We did not face problems associated with analysis of web-based content such as sampling and coding because we studied all Pads4Girls posts within the campaign period. Identifying and retrieving the posts were easy as they were clearly marked; they were on one Facebook

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account and few in number. The selection criterion for the posts that were analysed was that the post directly related to the Pads4Girls campaign. The content of analysed posts fell into four categories: political messages, mobilisation and advocacy, field visits and distribution of pads. We were also interested in whether a post included a link, pictures or videos, had any direct political recommendation and/or urged women to engage in politics or vote. We chose not to analyse comments on the posts.

We planned to interview Stella Nyanzi, the architect of the campaign, but she was arrested a week before she could be interviewed and was still in prison at the time of writing. We interviewed one of the campaign leaders who is identified by sex and level of association with the campaign. She was interviewed in Kampala on 15 November 2018. The interview was recorded and transcribed. The interview focused on the agency and structure of the campaign to provide deeper insights into the use of Facebook for civic and political expression and the possible connection between online and offline activism. We used cross-case analysis (Patton, 2002) by putting together views from different posts to common perspectives on central issues. We analyse the campaign in more detail in the next section.

Findings

We set out to study, through the Pads4Girls campaign, how Facebook was used to address the election promises of Ugandan politicians. We identified and analysed 42 posts made between 15 February 2017 and 31 March 2017. Stella Nyanzi describes herself on her timeline as a 'die-hard facebooker' meaning she used Facebook more than any other form of social media for the campaign. Posts took the form of text, pictures, posters and videos. We also analysed selected posts for the number of reactions/likes, the number of comments, the number of times a post was shared to understand whether the posts can be linked to the offline campaign.

The first post appeared on 15 February 2017 as a reaction to the announcement in parliament that the government lacked the funds to offer free sanitary pads, as had been promised. The 482-word post directly addressed the Minister of Education and First Lady in her capacity as a wife, woman and mother. It portrayed the First Lady as an accomplice of President Museveni and the regime as one that does not care about poor girls who cannot afford menstrual materials. It emphasised that girls who do not have menstrual hygiene materials will stay away from school during their periods. The post also raised issues that affect Uganda such as

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poverty, bribery, corruption and misappropriation of funds. Nyanzi explicitly mentions vote rigging in elections. The post, which had more than 36,000 likes and 774 comments, reflects the magnitude of the interest in the topic of lack of sanitary pads.

Nyanzi was, as a result of this post, summoned to the Criminal Investigations Department (CID) and charged with cyber harassment and computer misuse. A lead campaign organiser explained this as follows:

> When it was clear that this is political persecution more than anything else – we said that we needed to sanitize the process. As using sanitary pads is a sanitation issue [we thought]: to sanitize a dirty regime. For us it was symbolic and it was also a good way to cure political manipulation. (Personal communication, 15.11.2018)

The campaign organiser further explained that many Ugandan women felt that the president forgot the electorate after being re-elected, a failure that was further exacerbated by his wife's announcement of the lack of funds for MHM. In response to the summons to CID, Stella Nyanzi urged upon the public through Facebook to bring sanitary pads to CID. Several activists and the mainstream media responded to the call and brought menstrual hygiene materials as the interviewee further explains: 'A lot of them related with her [Stella Nyanzi] in the sense that she is a woman … [and] – What if I am next?' (personal communication, 15.11.2018). This indicates that initiatives that are as topically and clearly targeted as this one may prompt more women to become more active, to assert their needs upon elected leaders and to become more aware of their social and political rights. The architects of the Pads4Girls campaign and their sympathisers regarded the government's failure to provide pads as a breach of promise; the government furthermore used criminal charges to attempt to limit the campaigners' freedom of expression. As the lead campaign organiser put it, leaders who make political promises have a mandate to deliver after being voted.

Post Format

Posts related to the Pads4Girls campaign took the forms of text, video, pictures and Internet links, as summarised in Table 3.1.

As can be seen from Table 3.1, more than half (52%) of all posts contain both text and pictures. The writer extensively used images to illustrate her

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Table 3.1 Type of post for the campaign

Post type	*Number of times type appears*	*%*
Text only	6	14.3
Text + pics	22	52.3
Pics only	2	4.7
Video + text	2	4.7
Video only	3	7
Internet link + text	7	17
Link only	–	–
Total	**42**	**100**

point of view and as evidence of the issues she raised. The pictures tell the story of the campaign. They show the campaign team meeting students and teachers at schools, receiving sanitary pads, distributing them, meeting journalists, politicians and local producers of sanitary pads, and show boxes of pads. The frequent use of images of real and drawn pads is considered to be an important element in the process of normalising menstruation. Pads are often a taboo as menstruation itself and are seldom shown in their real form in public. They are usually concealed in boxes or bags when illustrated, for example, in commercials. Other pictures in the posts are documents such as a letter from the police summoning Stella, documents of air tickets and an image of a counterfeit Facebook page alert in which the activist draws readers to a post in which she is announced dead.

There were six text-only posts (14.3%) of all posts analysed, most being long write-ups of between 19 and 548 words, the average being 303.5 words. The writer also shared external Internet links, most relating to *GoFundMe* for mobilisation of funds for buying sanitary pads. Other links include a YouTube video and an online article in which a government minister threatens to arrest Stella Nyanzi.

A few videos were used. They were, however, long, between 4 and 17 minutes. The videos show Stella Nyanzi criticising the government and talking about the importance of providing menstrual hygiene materials. The campaign was regarded as a way in which ‘citizens were taking care of Uganda’s poor girls who are neglected by government, the president, minister of education and parliament’. Our analysis identified President Museveni’s failure to honour his election campaign promise after re-election as a leading theme in the Pads4Girls Facebook posts.

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Categories of Content of Posts

Posts fall into four major categories, political messages, mobilisation and advocacy messages, field visits and distribution of pads messages, and messages that combine politics, mobilisation and distribution messages (mixed content). These are shown in Table 3.2.

Political Messages

Political content comprised 19% of the total number of posts as per Table 3.2. They contain political rhetoric and address and challenge the President, the First Lady, women in positions of power and the government in general. These posts are directly critical of the government and point out its weaknesses including corruption, dictatorship, lawlessness, rigging of elections and nepotism. For example, the police summons was described as an attempt to gag, censor and silence as Nyanzi's Facebook post on March 4 states, 'I will not stop speaking my critique of the dictatorial corrupt lawless and rogue regime of the Musevenis'. Another post is about high government expenditure on security instead of prioritising education. The author uses idioms such as 'presidential handshake' that are used in the Ugandan context to mean corruption and misuse of public funds as can be seen in this excerpt from Nyanzi's post on February 17: 'Tell Yoweri Museveni to give a presidential handshake[8] to Uganda's poor young women […]. Cut down the expenditure on bullets and buy re-usable menstruation pads'. The above quote suggests that menstrual-related challenges and their impact such as high school dropout rate that is prevalent in Uganda could be addressed if government prioritised them by allocating funds to them. From the analysis, it was discerned that the campaign was also concerned with highlighting problems that bedevil Uganda such as graft, bribery, nepotism, violation of civil rights, vote

Table 3.2 Categories of posts

Category of content	*Frequency*	*Percentage*
Political messages	8	19
Mobilisation and advocacy	13	31
Field visits & distribution	13	31
Mixed content (politics, mobilisation & distribution)	8	19
Total	**42**	**100**

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rigging, police brutality, torture and killing government critics, poor governance and poverty. Some of the campaign points refer to the appointment of the First Lady to the post of Minister of Education as a case of nepotism. The issues raised in the campaign such as corruption, poverty, rigging of elections and human rights abuse dominate political discourse during and after elections as government critics seek to oust Museveni who has been in power since 1985.

Additionally, some of the campaign posts are concerned with the dictatorial tendencies of President Museveni's government and describe him as a dictator and the First Lady as an accomplice to the regime that has failed to improve the lives of the poor. The author regards the First Lady as a powerful woman who should, by virtue of her position (as a woman, First Lady and government minister), influence policies that concern girls and women. The posts about the campaign implied that the Minister of Education (also First Lady) was an accomplice of the president (her husband) instead of compelling him to fulfil the promise to providing sanitary pads. From the Facebook posts, we discerned that Stella Nyanzi expects women in positions of authority to rein in their male counterparts and fight against injustice in addition to prioritising gender needs.

Mobilisation and Advocacy

The second category included posts that mobilise the donation of sanitary pads. There were 13 posts containing mobilisation and advocacy messages, which represent 31% of all posts in the studied period. The pads and funds mobilisation started after the author, Stella Nyanzi, received police summons and explained that police were investigating her for offensive communication and cyber harassment. The social media posts were, shown by her summons to CID, being treated as criminal in nature. At this point she called on friends and well-wishers to support her by going to 'Kibuli police station with clean sanitary pads and menstrual hygiene products'. The post from 6 March in part reads:

> As the CID boys and girls grill me about my social media postings and tweets, my friends and supporters will challenge Janet Kataaha Museveni and her husband Yoweri Museveni, by collecting sanitary towels to distribute to some of our poor students in the country. Please come in plenty and join us sanitize Uganda. Bring a pad or two, a packet of pads or more, a box of pads or more to Kibuli Police Station.

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The above quote demonstrates the challenges faced by activists, critics of President Museveni and opposition politicians in general. Many activists and members of the political in Uganda frequently face police summons, arrest, travel bans and, in some cases, physical harm for pointing out errors and problems that characterise the regime. Stella Nyanzi was summoned for championing the Pads4Girls campaign and for criticising President Museveni and the First Lady for reneging on an election campaign promise. The collection of sanitary pads can be regarded as a form of protest against the government's failure to provide free sanitary pads and against police summons over the campaign posts in which the author criticises the president and politicians. One of the campaign leaders attributed the genesis of the campaign to the criminal summons served upon the Pads4Girls architect. Her appearance before police was an opportunity to highlight Uganda's problems and spearhead the cleansing of what was regarded a dirty system. The motive for collecting sanitary pads was clear as the author deployed Facebook to call to action followers and well-wishers to participate in liberating Uganda and helping to keep poor girls in school by donating sanitary pads. From the posts, it is clear right from the beginning that the purpose of the Pads4Girls campaign is to 'collect and distribute' sanitary pads to poor girls in rural area. This goes to highlight that the problem of lack of sanitary pads and the corresponding school dropout rate due to menstruation is more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas. The Facebook posts suggest that providing free sanitary pads would help curb not only the school dropout rate but poverty in general. The analysis shows the seriousness with which communication is treated in Uganda. Apart from the criminal sermons (issued to Stella Nyanzi), the analysis revealed that Stella Nyanzi's appeal via social media attracted many people who congregated at CID with placards in support of the activist and the Pads4Girls. Journalists from the mainstream media were among those who assembled at the police station where Stella Nyanzi was interrogated as one of her Facebook posts on 9 March shows:

> During this interrogation, some concerned individuals brought sanitary pads and posters of support, in response to my call for us to provide for Uganda's poor daughters […]. Many public media houses sent representatives to cover the event. A female radio presenter invited my sister and I to her show where their radio station contributed two boxes of sanitary pads towards our cause.

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The above statement demonstrates the value attached to mainstream media as well as the complementarity of traditional and social media. While the campaign started and became popular on social media, it is the mainstream TV, radio and newspaper coverage that gave the campaign more momentum and credibility. The study found that campaign leaders appeared on radio and TV shows and gave interviews to journalists from in and out of Uganda which helped spread the word about the campaign and in collecting pads.

Subsequent posts request for financial contributions, provide a mobile telephone number for electronic money transfers and share a link[9] for crowdfunding for sympathisers abroad. The call brought people to Kibuli Police Station with sanitary pads and posters to show their support for Stella Nyanzi. The analysis showed that activists, journalists and several opposition members of parliament heeded the call and showed up at CID. Some of the posts suggest that Stella Nyanzi's appearance at CID turned into a news event as it attracted radio, TV and newspaper coverage. This popularised not only the campaign but also Stella Nyanzi, the champion of the cause. It is therefore arguable that the police summons put the campaign in the limelight because it made it newsworthy for the mainstream media. Moreover, it was discernible from the posts that the Pads4Girls campaign worked closely with local radio stations and local producers of sanitary pads. Radio stations such as Dembe FM and Beat FM served as collection points for sanitary pads, something that improved the credibility of the campaign. Such partnerships made the campaign robust and helped in the mobilisation of funds and materials such as teaching aids and booklets that were essential to the campaign.

Stella Nyanzi acknowledged the support received and appeals for contributions in the form of actual sanitary pads. The day Stella appeared at CID (07.03.2017), it was announced in a Facebook post that they had raised UGX2,462,784 (US$660.6) and US$1005 via the GoFundMe online page. The campaign raised more than US$3200 (about UGX12 million) and many boxes and packs of menstrual hygiene materials. They also raised approximately US$5852 through the GoFundMe initiative. The author regarded the Pads4Girls campaign as a way of showing Ugandan leaders that it was possible to provide such services to those who need them.

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Distribution of Pads

Some posts were about field visits and distribution of pads, with 13 posts being on these topics (31% of the total number of posts). The activists took the campaign, at this stage and after surveying and pre-testing the sanitary pads on the market, to the beneficiaries of the campaign in rural schools to begin actual distribution. These 13 posts document the activities carried out by the campaign team, including giving interviews to journalists, appearing on TV talk shows, travelling to schools, visiting local factories that produce affordable menstrual materials, distributing sanitary pads and school materials and teaching about menstrual hygiene.

Posts under this category demonstrate a form of accountability for funds and sanitary pads in order to win the trust of the donors. The writer reports about teaching and the distribution of menstrual materials, extensively using pictures to show the team at work at different locations. The posts mentioned the schools visited, the activities undertaken, the number of pads distributed and the number of beneficiaries.

Posts with Mixed Content

These posts contain direct political messages, appeals for donations and information about distributions. There were eight such posts. In such posts, the author talks about politicians who supported the campaign and joined in distributing sanitary pads. Furthermore, the posts give an account of the number of girls and teachers who received free menstrual and other hygienic materials. At the same time, the posts criticise leaders for letting down the electorate after being voted into power as demonstrated in the excerpt from a post on March 24:

> We, concerned citizens are showing President Museveni […] that all it takes to provide basic needs of sanitary pads to poor school girls in Uganda is the will, a bit of thinking, partnerships and lobbying […]. Shame on our heartless national leaders for failing to prioritise gender generational needs for the under privileged. Shame to the presidential couple for promising to give free sanitary pads to poor students – when they wanted votes – and then telling our parliamentarians that Uganda lacks money for these pads.

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The above statement criticises Uganda's political establishment and also highlights Uganda's problems. The extract is also an appeal for support of the campaign, which is a way of showing that citizens can play an important role in improving the lives of others.

Contributing to Political Change and Electoral Democracy?

Two of our research questions are as follows: Do the Facebook messages contain any direct political recommendations? Do they urge women to vote or become more active citizens? Most posts did not contain any direct political recommendations, and none contained explicit messages urging women to vote or become more active citizens. The political dimension of the campaign is, even so, indisputable, as one of the campaign leaders pointed out in the excerpt below:

> Again, we were founded on a political manipulation that we turned into a social victory. So politics if it is curing genuine societal needs should be able to ride on social media. Everything is political. […]. So, I know that elections can be equally successful. (personal communication, 15.11.2018)

The campaign leader continued by saying that the whole concept of social media was a misnomer: 'Why do you call it social media? Because it is a platform for socializing, but it is also political media. […] And everything we do is political anyway' (personal communication 15.11.2018).

Stella Nyanzi directed most of her messages at the Ugandan citizenry, irrespective of gender. One of the posts indicated that, despite the issue of menstrual hygiene mostly affecting women, the campaign was an intervention by citizens to ensure that girls do not miss school due to lack of safe menstrual materials. The messages were, therefore, directed not only towards women, but also towards individuals, organisations and communities interested in improving education by contributing to reduced absenteeism in schools due to lack of menstrual hygienic materials.

Most of the posts address citizens of all genders. But one message posted on 23.03.2017 indirectly recommends that all women across the political divide support the cause, noting that 'our citizen's campaign to provide sanitary pads to school girls is non-partisan, we partner with all willing stakeholders interested in serving under-privileged girls in Uganda'. Some messages pointed out specific female politicians who

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identified with the cause and participated in distributing sanitary pads. Female politicians Betty Nambooze and Sarah Eperu were both elected opposition members of parliament, representing the Democratic Party (DP) and the Forum for Democratic Change (FDC). One post praises Nambooze for mobilising schools and partnering with the Pads4Girls team to educate and distribute sanitary pads free of charge. A post on 24 March describes her as 'the only legislator in Uganda, today, with a heart that beats for our country's under-privileged school girls'. This may not pass as direct political campaigning for her. It is, however, an indirect way of endorsing her and presenting her as the right leader. One post also identified two male members of parliament who supported the campaign. The Facebook messages praise opposition politicians who supported a cause that was shunned by the government, hence discrediting politicians in power and casting opposition politicians in a positive light.

In what appears to be a political recommendation, one Facebook post on 19 March appeals to readers to resist human rights violations as can be discerned in the following extract:

> We must arise, resist, and defeat these rapists of our motherland. I am gathering my irish potatoes, camera-phone, laptop […] to go and wage a liberation war against these men with guns, knives and poison. Please join me with whatever weapons you have. We must liberate our country from Museveni's occupation.

This message was posted after the writer learned she was barred from travelling to the Netherlands to attend an academic conference because of her communication on social media about the Pads4Girls campaign. The messages urge all Ugandans to, irrespective of gender, fight against such injustices.

Impact of the Pads4Girls Campaign

The Facebook posts resulted in an offline campaign in which funds were collected and sanitary pads were mobilised and distributed to schools. As one of the campaign leaders explained in an interview:

> The campaign was more than successful […] The working group was started at the police station […] And then it evolved so quickly. In three days, we had

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> hit our target of 1 million pads … in three days we had a million pads. In two weeks, we had 7 million pads … We showed that if the government cannot deliver, we will deliver. (personal communication, 15.11.2018)

The campaign attracted the mainstream media, which supported the campaign by donating sanitary pads and cash, and by inviting the Pads4Girls campaigners to talk shows on radio and TV. The campaign gained coverage in local newspapers, radio and television and in international media. Three posts in particular talk about the role of journalists and mainstream media in the campaign. The findings indicate that mainstream media are important allies to popularise such interventions among supporters and beneficiaries alike beyond social media.

Social media's effect on traditional media's news reporting can be seen through news editors, and in some cases the governments that they observe, no longer being the gatekeepers of information. The cost of distribution has almost completely disappeared, resulting in radically different power relations. As one of the campaign leaders noted: 'It was absolutely fantastic in the sense that social media drew mainstream media. It was kind of the reverse of what would ordinarily be happening in Uganda' (personal communication, 15.11.2018). Traditional offline media driving online media is often talked about. This relationship is reversed here.

The analysis points to the role of women leaders in the cause. This is reflected in sentiments expressed by one of the campaign leaders, who stressed how women from all walks of life and from all political parties supported the movement. We see in the analysis of the Facebook posts how the number of people supporting the Pads4Girls campaign, including politicians, increased. For example, the Facebook posts of 23 and 24 March focused on two female members of parliament who supported the campaign. One post also stated that a female member of parliament had joined the Pads4Girls team to distribute and talk about menstrual hygiene.

Another renowned female member of parliament is referred to as participating in the campaign, the March 23 post stating: 'Today the team at #Pads4GirlsUg partnered with Hon. Sarah Eperu of the FDC Women's League and distributed menstrual hygiene materials to girls and teachers in three senior secondary schools in Ngora District'. Two male parliamentarians also joined the campaign as stated in a 14.03.2017 message: 'Hon. Muhammad Nsereko and Hon. Kato Lubwama were two male

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members of parliament who have joined Hon. Betty Nambooze Balileke in supporting the citizens' movement aimed at providing free sanitary pads to poor rural girls in Uganda'.

The analysis also shows that the campaign attracted established companies and organisations, some being producers of sanitary pads. For example, TUK Band 256 played at a fundraising event organised by Ice Breakers Uganda (IBU), the proceeds being donated to the Pads4Girls campaign. The posts also indicated that local producers of low-cost sanitary pads such as Afripads Uganda Limited and Shuya Pads had donated pads and reading materials on menstrual hygiene.

The government responded to the campaign and the Facebook posts by charging Stella Nyanzi with offensive communication and cyber harassment, to prevent her from using social media. She was blocked from travelling abroad and there were reports that mainstream media had been ordered not to report about her or the campaign. The government stopped schools from inviting the Pads4Girls campaigners, intimidated her through interrogations and suspended her from her job. The distribution of sanitary pads eventually stopped just before Stella Nyanzi's arrest and incarceration at Luzira maximum security prison.

The First Lady Janet Museveni, who rarely gives media interviews, responded through a televised interview, which was widely shared on social media. The First Lady says in the interview: 'I have received reports about Dr Stella Nyanzi insulting me. I don't know what wrong I committed to deserve that kind of language and abuse. However, I want to tell Ugandans that I forgive her.' What started as one woman's Facebook posts turned into something big, attracting the attention of policy makers, politicians and activists and making headlines in the conventional media. On 31 March 2017, Nyanzi shares on Facebook the front page of the *Daily Monitor*, one of the main news publications in Uganda and its headline 'Dr. Nyanzi sacked for insulting the first lady'.

Discussion and Conclusions

Stella Nyanzi's arrest and prosecution show the potential impact of conversations on social media and how seriously semi-democratic regimes such as Uganda take online platforms. The online and offline campaigns further show the growing importance to social and political activism of platforms such as Facebook and their importance to the messages of

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individual activists that would not make it into the mainstream press. This furthermore highlights that social media users (non-professional journalists) are setting the agenda away from conventional media and professional journalists, through independent unaffiliated individuals such as Stella Nyanzi. Digital activists, prior to this campaign, used pseudonyms when criticising the government. They were also widely believed to be men, such as Tom Voltaire Okwalinga, who is very critical of the government. No one, however, knows his identity. As veteran journalist and analyst Charles Onyango Obbo muses, the government's response to the Pads4Girls Facebook posts shows the power of social activism. He rightly argues: 'the pads4girls campaign set Facebook on fire and upset those in power […]. She [Stella] is the first neck on the chopping board female social media combatant. Unlike other digital media activists who are men and anonymous, Nyanzi is the first female Ugandan to criticise the establishment using her name and known identity' (Obbo, 2017). Nyanzi, therefore, became the first female social media critic of the government who was not anonymous, an aspect that reflects a shift in gender, politics and power in Uganda. It also reflects the capacity of social media platforms to enable women such as Nyanzi to directly and boldly address elected leaders and demand accountability.

The subject of menstruation and menstrual hygiene remains a highly private matter and a taboo which is not openly discussed in public. We can however rightly conclude, in this case, that social media enabled open discussions on the subject. This would not have been possible in the mainstream press. The Pads4Girls case also highlights the significance of social media in political communication and mobilisation for a social cause. The campaign points to shifting dynamics in the use of Facebook. This highlights the inadequacies of political campaigning and emphasises social media's role during and after elections.

This chapter, unlike previous research that has been on how individual politicians and political parties deploy social media for political communication in elections, highlights the use of social media by an unaffiliated female activist, to bring an unfulfilled election campaign promise to the attention of Ugandans. She uses Facebook to highlight the weaknesses of elected politicians and as a way to de-campaign them.

The Pads4Girls campaign was a social cause aimed at addressing a social problem. It was, however, founded on what its architects considered to be political manipulation. There is hope that social media campaigns such as Pads4Girls can mobilise women to be more active and more politically

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conscious about what is going on in Uganda. The Facebook messages drew readers' attention to an unfulfilled political promise made during the election campaign. Findings suggest that even though women may not directly aspire to elected positions, they do follow the elections and take note of what political candidates communicate during campaigns. The architects of Pads4Girls regard social media as a powerful and timely tool in facilitating the political and social activism of issues involving genuine societal needs. Pads4Girls showed ordinary people, particularly women, that it was possible to successfully employ social media to confront political leaders and hold them accountable. Social media is therefore a mode of social and political communication that is as significant as conventional media. A female activist directly challenged elected politicians via Facebook and got them to respond in subtle and direct ways. Facebook is therefore transforming how women engage and communicate with authorities and with politicians. The findings of this study emphasise the notion that social media is driving the power of the media away from established institutions and regulated authorities into the hands of society (Branson, 2012).

Pads4Girls also points to the importance of combining online and offline activism. The Facebook posts relating to the campaign were widely read (based on likes, comments and shares). It was, however, the offline activities such as appearances in the mainstream media, meetings, visits and the distribution of menstrual hygiene materials in schools that made the campaign visible and more meaningful. This research presents an example of online political and social debate that was taken into affected communities, thus impacting society and contributing to the improvement of education. There was, however, no *slacktivism* in this campaign, as Morozov opined about online political activities replacing offline activities. The Pads4Girls campaign serves as a good example of online and offline activities complementing and reinforcing each other to critique, rally and mobilise people and funds and distribute menstrual hygiene materials.

The campaign was largely regarded as successful. We must, however, note that it only lasted for 21 days and then stopped. One of the reasons it stopped was because the government made it difficult to continue to mobilise and distribute pads. Stella was suspended from her job, barred from flying out of the country and was eventually arrested. Thus, the success of social media civic initiatives including political campaigning depends on the goodwill of the political establishment in which they are deployed. The achievements of Pads4Girls, followed by its unceremonious

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shutdown, can be attributed to the political, social and economic conditions in Ugandan society. Politicians, for example, take advantage of the poor by making promises such as providing free menstrual hygiene facilities. The poor economic conditions are, however, the reason why the Pads4Girls campaign gained so much online and offline support. The most important result of the campaign, however, perhaps is that it stirred citizens and showed many women what a powerful tool speaking out and mobilising can be. The long-term effects of this are yet to be seen.

Notes

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2. https://www.facebook.com/Pads4GirlsUg/, accessed 12.10.2018.
3. https://www.facebook.com/stella.nyanzi/posts/10155002229535053, accessed 12.10.2018.
4. Internet World Stats: At http://www.internetworldstats.com/africa.htm, accessed 09.01.2017.
5. Protest against the rising cost of living in April 2011.
6. It is deemed the first social media election in Uganda's history. See http://www.voanews.com/a/social-media-young-voices-uganda-election-campaign/3195260.html. Accessed 30.09.2016.
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CHAPTER 4

Discrimination Against Female Politicians on Social Media: An Analysis of Tweets in the Run-Up to the July 2018 Harmonised Elections in Zimbabwe

Gibson Ncube and Gwatisira Yemurai

Introduction

Representing women in the domain of politics is not simply a question of "political equality but also relevant to the general pursuit of a more egalitarian society" (Garcia-Blanco & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2012, p. 422). The sexism that female politicians have to contend with in virtual online spaces simply mirrors the kinds of discrimination they have to face in "offline" spaces that continue to be entrenched in patriarchy. Whilst social media may be considered to be a political equaliser, where men and women have access to spaces where they can communicate, such communication, as

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suggested by Patterson (2016), remains unbalanced given the forms of discrimination that primarily target female politicians. Haraldsson and Wängnerud (2018, pp. 2–3) term this media sexism and define it as:

> The (re)production of societal sexism through under- and misrepresentation of women in media, leading to a false portrayal of society through gendered lens. Media sexism both reflects sexism in society (media reproducing sexism) and portrays a more gender-segregated picture than reality (media producing sexism), such that media is a good measure of societal sexism but also makes society more sexist than it would be otherwise.

Such sexism and bigotry is certainly not unique and exclusive to Zimbabwe. Female politicians in countries considered progressive, such as the USA, also continue to experience diverse forms of sexism online and offline. In the run-up to the November 2016 Presidential Elections in the USA, Donald Trump referred to his opponent Hillary Clinton as a "nasty woman" (Woolf, 2016). This sexist and misogynist slur by Trump sought to vilify Clinton for aspiring towards the top political job in that country. McGregor and Mourão (2016, p. 1) carried out a research during the 2014 US midterm elections. Their study highlighted more than a quarter of a million tweets about 50 candidates for state-wide offices during the 2014 US elections. The results suggest that when a woman opposes a man, the conversation revolves around her, but she retains a smaller portion of rhetorical share. "We find that gender affects network structure—women candidates are both more central and more replied to when they run against men" (McGregor & Mourão, 2016, p. 1).

In Zimbabwe, the Constitution makes express emphasis on gender equality. Chapter 2 Article 17 (1) of the Constitution mentions that the State has to promote at all times gender equality in all spheres of Zimbabwean society, politics included. The law, on paper, strives to ensure that men and women are treated equally in all spheres of public life in Zimbabwe. The Constitution (2013, p. 20) also states that:

> The State must take all measures needed, including legislative measures, to ensure that both genders are equally represented in all institutions and agencies of government at every level; and women constitute at least half the membership of all Commissions and other elective and appointed governmental bodies established by or under the Constitution or any Act of Parliament; and the State and all institutions and agencies of government at every level must take practical measures to ensure that women have access to

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> resources, including land, on the basis of equality with men; and the State must take positive measures to rectify gender discrimination and imbalances resulting from past practices and policies.

Drawing from the Constitution of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwean society is in principle meant to give the citizens, male or female, equal rights and opportunities, be it politically, economically and socially so as to create a fair society with people who are able to work and participate equally in all sectors. What the Constitution of Zimbabwe deems important seems in actual fact a mere statement meant to decorate the Constitution on Rights of Women.

In spite of these legal provisions that set out to guarantee gender equality, patriarchy has thrived in framing gender relations through a binary of two unequal entities: the masculine and the feminine. In addition to the binary, patriarchy has ensured that these two gender roles are performed within specific spaces and contexts. Men and women are expected to perform their gendered roles within predetermined spaces and once a gender strays from that space, it is deemed incorrect or dissident. In traditionally patriarchal societies, the public space is the preserve of men. Given that politics is also performed in the public space, it therefore implies that it is the domain of man. Thus, a woman who decides to enter politics is not in her place. The place of the woman is the private space of the home. Women are in the wrong place when they enter the domain of politics because they are traditionally not involved in power and its exercise.

In this chapter, we focus on the framing of Zimbabwean female politicians on microblogging site Twitter. We focus on Twitter given the manner in which engagement through hashtags and threads makes it possible to easily locate information. Moreover, given the restriction on the number of words that can be used in composing messages (tweets), it is possible to produce and circulate narratives that can be shared and engaged with easier than when the texts are longer. In the few months towards the July 2018 elections, several opinionated female politicians such as Fadzayi Mahere, Dudu Nyirongo, Kudzai Mubaiwa and others were often bullied and harassed online. The bullying and harassment was sexist and misogynistic given that these politicians had to contend with messages that often sexually denigrated them. We will therefore seek to examine in this chapter the conditions under which these sexist and misogynistic messages were created and especially show that these messages were as a result of the double transgression that these female politicians had unwittingly committed by entering the political space. The first transgression involved the

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very act of entering a domain that continues to be male-dominated. The second transgression is in the form of the female politicians making their voices heard on social media, which itself is an extension of the public sphere that, as we have previously discussed, is the preserve of men.

This chapter will set out to grapple with the following questions: In what ways does cyberspace lend itself to sexism and the objectification of women? Are there any differences between representations of female politicians in cyberspace compared to traditional media such as print and electronic (radio and television)?

Methodology and Theoretical Underpinnings

This chapter is based on an analysis of tweets. We contend that tweets provide an important anthropological source of information created and circulated in modern-day societies. We particularly choose to focus on Twitter because of the brevity of the messages that are circulated on this platform. Moreover, many politicians in Zimbabwe have actively used Twitter to talk about diverse issues of contemporary concern. With Facebook, for example, posts have a limited potential of being viewed because posts are seen by "friends" of the person who makes a post. With Twitter, hashtags make it easy for anyone to see posts regardless of whether one follows or does not follow the person posting the tweet.

We make use of Twitter Application Programming Interface (API) to collect tweets and retweets or replies to tweets. The use of the API makes it possible to easily identify the name (or username) of the person who makes a tweet. The API also allows for identification of the date and time when a tweet was posted as well as, in some instances, the place from where the tweet was posted.

The tweets that we examine were collected from the three top trending topics during and in the lead-up to the July 2018 elections in Zimbabwe. These three trending topics were captured by the hashtags "#ZimElections2018", "#ElectionZw" and "ZimDecides2018". Through the use of the website www.tweetbinder.com, we were able to ascertain, for each of these hashtags, their potential reach as well as the specific tweets/contributors that had used the particular hashtags. We only make use of tweets that are available in the public domain. Going through all the tweets generated by www.tweetbinder.com, we went through the tweets in the three hashtags and selected all those that spoke about female politicians. In our engagement with these tweets, we are guided by the

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"Guidelines for use of tweets in broadcast or other offline media" which stipulates that it is permissible to republish tweets but only unchanged. This guideline ensured that we were able to ethically engage with any tweets without there being fear of copyright or intellectual property rights being infringed.

To examine and think through the tweets, we make use of Goffman's work on frames and framing as well as Gramsci's theorisation of hegemony. These theoretical underpinnings are important in that they contribute to the understanding of meaning making and meaning circulation. The focus of these theories on socio-political and symbolic realities is relevant in as far as it influences representation processes (Adoni & Mane, 1984).

Framing is important in understanding diverse communicative texts. The main concern with frames and framing theory is how discourses are organised within these communicative texts. Boland (1989, p. 602) acknowledges in this regard that "the processes through which participants frame and reframe a situation is an important part of understanding the making of meanings". In Goffman's (1974, p. 3) argument, the main focus of a frame is "about the organisation of experience" that makes it possible to make sense of "the structure of experience individuals have at any moment of their social lives". For the purposes of this chapter, the theory of frames is used to better understand how women in the political arena are constructed. Such framing and construction, we will argue, is informed by patriarchal ideology which casts women as eternal subordinates to men. This framing is itself anchored on the hegemony of patriarchy and masculine dominance.

In his conceptualisation of hegemony, Gramsci (1971, p. 324) posits that understanding the role of power in human relations requires an appreciation of what an individual is: "the starting point of critical elaboration is knowing what one really is …, as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory". Once specific historical processes have been understood, it becomes relevant to examine how power relations are established and maintained. According to Gramsci, hegemony is a condition in which one group exercises some form of leadership and control over another group that is deemed subaltern.

In this chapter, we read Gramsci's work through a feminist lens that highlights the manner in which women are subordinated to the dominance of men, especially in the field of politics. Although women make up

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just above half of the population of most countries in the world, these demographics do not readily translate to similar representation in as far politics and positions of power are concerned (Paxton, Hughes, & Painter, 2009, p. 1). The under-representation of women in positions of power and influence is a worldwide phenomenon which attests to the fact that "when the dominant social culture precludes young women from enjoying a full education and socializes them from birth into roles that are removed from the world of public decision making, then the pool of likely women politicians is substantially reduced. Furthermore, women find it much more difficult to break into electoral office *en masse* when they are socioeconomically disadvantaged due to the burdens of poor health care, poor child care, and un/underemployment" (Reynolds, 1999, p. 550). In Zimbabwe, according to the last census conducted in 2017, 51% of the population is composed of women. However, women are essentially marginalised in politics with a representation that is less than a third in the current parliament.

An appreciation of hegemony is further enhanced by considering that hegemony, ideas and ideologies operate within spaces. The public sphere, where politics is played out, has generally been deemed a masculine space. Lara (1998, p. 7) offers feminist reading of the public space and advocates for the initiation of "emancipatory institutional transformations in which the boundaries of what should be considered public and private need to be redrawn". She explains that once voices of women are afforded a place in the public sphere, they have the potential to "simultaneously create and reconfigure the symbolic order" (Lara, 1998, p. 23). Such rethinking of the symbolic order ensures that the sacrosanct position of masculinity is questioned and reconsidered. By giving space and time to feminine voices and bodies within the public sphere, these voices and bodies become "contestatory discourses, or narratives, [that] are necessarily tied to strategies of resistance vis-à-vis strategic power and ideological domination" (Lara, 1998, p. 5). Female bodies such as those of female politicians are unwittingly tied up to a challenging of male hegemony.

The political sphere, as previously pointed out, continues to be the preserve of men. Politics is inherently linked to power and, in patriarchal societies such as Zimbabwe, power belongs to and is wielded by men. Bourdieu (2001, p. 1) pertinently highlights that masculinity represents an "established order, with its relations of domination, its rights and prerogatives, privileges and injustices". The established order has perpetuated the situation in which men have special rights and privileges such as the

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exercise of power. If politics has been dominated by men, then this challenging of male hegemony often incites violent reactions by menfolk in their attempts to safeguard the quasi-inviolable nature of their dominance. Dobash and Dobash (1992, p. 3) explain in this line of thought that "the sources of conflict leading to violent events reveal a great deal about the nature of relations between men and women, demands and expectations of [women], the prerogatives and power of [men] and cultural beliefs that support individual attitudes of inequality". What Dobash and Dobash highlight is the fact that patriarchy, more than being a set of ideologies, is also deeply ingrained in sociocultural practices that ensure that the distinction between the genders in maintained.

Although women entering the previously male-dominated political space is a form of challenging the status quo, it remains that they are subjected to the masculine/male gaze. Instead of considering female politicians as intellectual beings, the male gaze objectifies and reduces them to nothing more than their physical body parts. Wesely (2003, p. 656) explains in this regard that the objectification of women attests to intricate "cultural norms that refigure women's bodies as objects of consumption for the male gaze". Gervais et al. (2012, p. 743) further clarify in relation to the sexual objectification of women that "it is a specific type of appearance focus concentrated on sexual body parts. According to objectification theory, when people sexually objectify women, they separate women's sexual body parts or functions from the entire person, reduce these sexual body parts to the status of mere instruments, or regard the sexual body parts as capable of representing the entire person". Female politicians are treated the same way as other women in that their intellectual capacities are ignored as the focus is on their bodies and the sexualisation of their bodies.

Questioning the Marital Status of Female Politicians

As we have previously pointed out, the public space is one dominated by men and one in which power is exercised. The place of the woman is anywhere away from this place of power. And that place is naturally the domesticated private space of the home. When looking at the Twitter timelines of Fadzayi Mahere (a lawyer who ran for Member of Parliament for Mount Pleasant constituency in Harare) and Kudzai Mubaiwa (an

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independent candidate who ran for Councillor of Ward 6 in Harare), we quickly understand that men who bully these two female politicians are convinced that they should not venture into politics because it is not their place.

A recurrent question that was posted by disgruntled men related to the marital status of the female politicians. One simply needs to type on Google "Is Fadzayi Mahere" to notice that the most popular search item is "Is Fadzayi Mahere married". Fadzayi Mahere is not the only female politician whose marital status has been the subject of debate on Twitter. After posting a tweet declaring her interest to run as an independent candidate for Ward 6 in Harare, Mubaiwa's tweet obtained many replies from men. One man identified as @NyashaDesire asks Mubaiwa: "What's your qualification, are you married?" Another man identified by the handle @ lskmakani retorts "first thing first … (sic) are you married?" These tweets seem to suggest that marriage is a prerequisite qualification for any woman that aspires for a political post. It is rather baffling how a woman's marital status qualifies her for any political office or makes her competent for such a post. Is it that a married woman is more trustworthy or more hardworking? Or is it that a woman's value exponentially increases when she marries? Does that therefore imply that unmarried women can't be trusted with political power? Or are unmarried women rather too immature to properly handle and make sense of political power? Reading behind these tweets, it is possible to find that the main issue concerns whether women are able to subsume themselves to patriarchy. An unmarried woman is one who defies patriarchy because she displays independence. A married woman, on the other hand, is considered to be a "servant" of patriarchy. In this way, the men who question the marital status of female politicians seem to suggest that married women are more trustworthy with power than unmarried women. Mungwini (2008, p. 206) argues, in an analysis of Shona culture in Zimbabwe, that the sceptical perception of unmarried women stems from the fact that they do not have a man to keep a check on their social behaviour:

> Among the Shona it has been found out that women's social recognition and sense of womanhood suffer greatly when they are not married. […] For the Shona, being a married woman and therefore being somebody's wife gives the woman respectability because of the strong presupposition that a married woman is necessarily constrained in her behaviour while a single woman living alone is perceived as a freelancer who does what she likes. The

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> fact that there is no husband to put brakes in her social interaction turns her into a potential danger to the society.

Mungwini's use of the phrase "to put brakes in her social interaction" shows that the bone of contention is power and control and not respectability. An unmarried woman, spinster or widowed, is a danger to society because she lives outside and away from the control of patriarchal dictates.

What the questioning of the marital status of female politicians further highlights is the fact that the issue at hand is about the policing of women's agency by hegemonic masculinity. This policing is as a result of women venturing into the male-dominated domain of power. Okimoto and Brescoll (2010, p. 931), in a study of female politicians in the USA, attest that "the power-seeking female politician elicited stronger feelings of moral outrage than male politicians". They further develop that:

> Notably, perceived job competence was an important predictor of voting preferences. Consistent with past research, both communality and agency played a role in perceived competence. Interestingly, however, the power-seeking female target also appeared to be disadvantaged in her competence ratings. The power-seeking female was seen as less communal and thus less competent than her non-power-seeking counterpart and was not seen as any more agentic. In contrast, the power-seeking male did not suffer from a perceived communal deficit and in fact was seen as more agentic than the non-power-seeking male. Therefore, although competence was clearly an important predictor of voting, the competence evaluations were biased against female power-seeking politicians and in favour of male power-seeking politicians. (Okimoto & Brescoll, 2010, p. 932)

Okimoto and Brescoll point out above that female politicians provoke moral outrage when they are viewed to be power-seeking. Once they are viewed as power-seeking, then they lose their communality (cultural stereotype that frames women as sensitive, warm and compassionate). The loss of communality presents the female politician as less than a woman and effectively affects her competence. Interestingly though, the competence of a male politician increases as his communality decreases. The question of communality certainly features in the questions on the marital status of female Zimbabwean politicians. What the above comments by men show is that they would trust a married female politician than an unmarried one. Moreover, the way in which the marital status of female politicians seems to be a bone of contention shows how there is inordinate

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focus that is placed on the private lives of female politicians. Komath (2014) explains on this point that:

> Women in politics are also subject to more stringent scrutiny of their personal lives unlike their male counterparts. If a woman is unmarried and has an active sex life, society deems her promiscuous and that promiscuity becomes her identity and repels her voters. And if the same woman is married, then the voters are concerned about how she would manage both work and family at the same time. These trivial details of her personal life then define her in politics rather than her stand on various issues which really matter.

If Komath's argument can be stretched, we attest that focusing on a female politician's personal life and not on the quality of her discourses and political capabilities is to miss the point. The point in this instance is that a female politician, as is the case with the male politician, is more than her personal life and cannot be reduced to it as if to imply that she is nothing more than what she does in the privacy of her life away from her public life. It is also interesting that in Zimbabwe, when a woman enters politics, their name is often prefixed with the title "Amai" (mother). This prefix was used with female politicians like Grace Mugabe, Joice Mujuru and Thokozani Khupe. The "Amai" prefix should not be viewed simply as a form of respectful address. This prefix should be read as a reductive and constricting script which replicates wide-ranging connotations of women merely with patriarchal stereotypes that emphasise women's purportedly innate qualities of mothering and nurturing qualities. What this does is to simply buttress male-driven and male-centred ideals and values for what female politicians should be and should be able to do. In essence, this further confines the potentials and roles that are accessible and obtainable by women who aspire for positions of power.

By framing female politicians as innately motherly and mothering, there is an attempt towards domesticating them. Such domestication is important, if not necessary, because female politicians by their very entrance into the political arena tame male hegemony which requires women to be invisible and voiceless.

Twitter presents itself as an effective medium for abusing women politicians because of the anonymity that the platform offers. Through a process named "catfishing", a user is able to fabricate a fake online identity. The false sense of security afforded by the anonymous online identity

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makes it easy for women to be the victims of virulent sexism. Mantilla (2013, p. 568) points out in this regard that:

> Gendertrolling has much in common with other offline targeting of women such as sexual harassment in the workplace and street harassment. In these arenas, as is the case with gendertrolling, the harassment is about patrolling gender boundaries and using insults, hate, and threats of violence and/or rape to ensure that women and girls are either kept out of, or play subservient roles, in male-dominated arenas.

Policing of women in online spaces thus feeds into the broader surveillance and regulation of women's bodies and existences that takes place in offline public spaces such as homes, workplaces, taxi ranks and other places.

Infantilisation and Shaming of Female Politicians

When female politicians' personal and private lives are not being scrutinised, they are infantilised, Goffman (1979) in his seminal work *Gender Advertisements* coins the term "symbolic infantilisation" of women to describe the situation in which they are treated and portrayed as perpetual minors who have to be continuously supervised and guided. Chari (2008, p. 106), in his analysis of the infantilisation of women in contemporary Zimbabwean music, explains that:

> Infantilisation results in men determining the roles and responsibilities of women, and also gives men the power to determine which of their behaviours constitute disobedience. Women are therefore monitored and supervised as would minors, thus eroding their sense of worth and visibility.

Infantilisation disregards the academic qualifications, competencies and the experience that women might have in their area of specialisation. A week into the month of March 2018, Fadzai Mahere came under attack on Twitter after she called out her University of Zimbabwe students who were calling her "Fadzie" within the academic space of the lecture room instead of the more formal and appropriate "Ms Mahere" or "Advocate Mahere". One fellow Twitter user @Zichivhu replied to her tweet by saying:

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> In our culture she is Fadzie until she gets married and has children then she becomes Mai (so and so), don't @ me … I am merely pointing *zviito zvedu* (our way of doing things).

The question to ask in this instance is who these mysterious "our" or "us" referred to by this Twitter user are? The issue boils down again to a question of her being married and marriage affording her the privilege to be respectfully addressed. This tweet makes it clear that as long as Mahere remains unmarried, she deserves to be called by nicknames even in very formal settings. This tweet also highlights that patriarchal societies continue to be governed by cultural and traditional practices that do not recognise the worth of women but rather devalue them. This infantilisation is also evident in the way in which the political life of Joice Mujuru, a decorated war hero and former vice president of Zimbabwe, was attributed to her husband, a former army general. This inevitably demeaned and downplayed her own agency including her personal contributions and sacrifices during the liberation war.

When female politicians are not infantilised, they have to contend with shaming and cyberbullying. The Zimbabwean government promulgated the Cybercrime and Cybersecurity Bill in 2017, whose main objective was to ensure that the online space is one that is safe for all users. Section 17 of the Bill forbids the conveyance and circulation of incorrect, untrue or erroneous messages that have the effect of causing harm or criminal defamation. The Section of the Cybercrime and Cybersecurity Bill (2017) states in this regard that:

> Any person who unlawfully and intentionally by means of a computer or information system makes available, broadcasts or distributes data to any other person concerning an identified or identifiable person knowing it to be false with intent to cause psychological or economic harm shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a fine not exceeding level ten or to imprisonment for a period not exceeding five years or to both such fine and such imprisonment.

In spite of the comprehensive protection offered by the law, the problem of women politicians being bullied and harassed online suggested that the law alone is not sufficient in protecting women. What needs to be dealt with are the diehard patriarchal societies that make it difficult for the full participation of women in politics. To consider the toxicity of patriarchy, one simply needs to look at the reactions to tweets by female politicians

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like Linda Masarira and Fadzai Mahere during the period leading to the July 2018 elections to notice the kind of sexist backlash that these women had to deal with online. Linda Masarira, an opposition politician, discussing the hardships facing female politicians in Zimbabwe, explains:

> The challenge that is crosscutting is finance and resources that is why I have resorted mainly to social media and door-to-door campaigns because it is cheaper and you meet one on one with the people. The only complaint I have is cyberbullying and derogatory statements on social media, where I think Zimbabweans have to mature from petty politics of personalisation [and] attack an idea not an individual because if you think you can do better than me get into the race. (Nyavaya, 2018)

The attacks on the persons and personalities of female politicians, according to Masarira, are as serious as the financial and material constraints that female politicians have to contend with. This is because the sexist attacks, like financial and material constraints, serve to limit the potential of women. These constraints ensure that women are not competing on a level ground with their male counterparts. Similarly, reacting to violent and sexist outbursts against her, online and offline, opposition politician Thokozani Khupe, leader of one of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) factions, tweeted:

> Violence against women is a violation of human rights. Sadly, women in Zimbabwe suffer under a heavy yoke of all forms of violence. We must uproot such violence to achieve developmental social change in Zimbabwe our lifetime. #16DaysofActivism #orangetheworld, UN_Women (@ DrThoko_Khupe, 09.12.17)

Khupe explains in this tweet that the violence that women face is in fact a violation of their human rights. In Khupe's argument, violence against women, even in the form of online bullying, is a critical hindrance to social development. It is worth pointing out that this violence, bullying and sexist backlash has a long history in Zimbabwe and is not merely a feature that became apparent in the run-up to the 2018 elections. The attacks on former First Lady Grace Mugabe were undoubtedly extremely virulent and sexist. The type of name calling forced her to a violent outburst: "*handisi hure raMugabe*" (I am not Mugabe's whore). The attacks against Grace Mugabe focused mainly on her character. She was outspoken and often had no filter to the kinds of issues that she addressed in political rallies. However, we argue that the manner in which she attempted to

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decouple from her husband and become her own agent could explain the kinds of sexist remarks with which she had to contend. Magaisa, academic and political analyst, explains that "the bottom line in most of the sex-related comments was that if Grace Mugabe got enough sex, she would not behave in the manner she was doing" (2017). Magaisa (2017) further posits that:

> Is it true that a woman lacking conjugal rights behaves as Grace does? Does this also apply to men? The truth is I have never heard that line used against male politicians, not even against Mugabe who has said more outrageous things and done worse in public life than his wife. There are many eccentric male characters in Zimbabwean politics and their conduct has never been explained on the basis of their lack of access to sex. I have been intrigued however, by the fact that this line is used against a female politician and never against a male politician.

Magaisa clarifies above that all the political faux pas that Grace Mugabe made were explained not as a result of her incompetence but rather her lack of sexual gratification. The same reasons are not used to explain the incompetence of male politicians. If that explanation cannot be used with male politicians, why then would it be valid in reference to female politicians? A comment piece by Zaba, in the form of an open letter to the new First Lady Auxillia Mnangagwa but directed at Mrs. Mugabe, states: "What we have seen since 2014 leaves a lot to be desired. While it is your democratic right to be involved in politics, there are standards that are expected of people who are at your level" (2017). These comments highlight the fact that different moral standards are used when judging male and female politicians in Zimbabwe. Female politicians are expected to conduct themselves in a morally upright manner whilst this is not expected of their male counterparts.

Violence Beyond the Space of Social Media

Social media, as we have previously explained, especially Twitter is a space in which users hide behind pseudo-identities. These pseudo-identities allow users to post sexist and violent messages knowing full well that they are protected by anonymity. Interestingly though, the violence and harassment that women face online have in some instances moved into the offline world. An example is Khupe who has been called, online and

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offline, the infamous Shona word for women who are considered wayward, *hure* (whore). Parliamentarian Priscilla Misihairabwi-Mushonga started an online movement of solidarity with Khupe under the international hashtag #MeToo. This movement culminated in Misihairabwi-Mushonga filling her papers for nomination in the 2018 elections wearing a red outfit emblazoned with the words "#MeToo" in the front and "HURE" in capital letters in the back. These actions by Misihairabwi-Mushonga went beyond feminist manifestation. It was a political statement that highlighted not just solidarity with Khupe but solidarity with many other female politicians who had faced similar harassment.

In an op-ed article entitled "In Zimbabwe, the enduring fear of single women" which appeared in *The New York Times*, author Panashe Chigumadzi offers a thought-provoking analysis of the deployment of the term *hure* particularly within the domain of politics in Zimbabwe. Chigumadzi (2018) explains:

> On 22 May, when the Supreme Court in Harare was adjudicating on a dispute between Ms Khupe and Mr Chamisa over the use of the party name and symbols, a crowd of Mr Chamisa's supporters shouted derogatory slogans and sang vulgar songs to shame Ms Khupe and called her a whore. Along with weakening the opposition, the factionalism had brought to the fore an enduring malaise in Zimbabwean polity: its fear of single, independent women in the public sphere. In physically threatening and declaring Ms Khupe a whore, Mr Chamisa's supporters stoked the fear of "unruly" African women, a fear that is pervasive across political formations.

What Chigumadzi explains above is that the sexism and violent backlash faced by female politicians in Zimbabwe is not limited to a single political party or formation. It cuts across all political parties in a way that shows that patriarchy knows political parties.

The violence against Khupe shows that the harassment female politicians face is not merely limited to online spaces. She was aggressively manhandled (pun intended) at the funeral of the Movement for Democratic Change - Tsvangirai faction (MDC-T) leader Morgen Tsvangirai. According to her narration of the ordeal, a group of men threw stones at her and even went as far as wanting to torch the hut in which she had sought refuge. This use of violence in the political spaces particularly towards women is deployed as a device to call them to submission to the patriarchal gatekeepers of political fiat and power. Violence in its manifold forms is used to intimidate and silence women who aspire to occupy a

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place in the political sphere. This regrettably results in aspiring female politicians abandoning their quest for political offices. When the news about her attack broke out online, one Twitter user even went on to comment that:

> *Ma Khupe I dnt think you cn be a good presidential candidate yo conduct is deplorable … can u explain why you are husbandless … Hatingatongwe nemukadzi asina murume zvinonesta … tanga watsvaga murume hasha idzo ndedze kushaya murume* (@onemailt 06.03.18) (Trans. Ms Khupe, I don't think you can be a good presidential candidate. Your conduct is deplorable … Can you explain why you are husbandless … We cannot be ruled by a woman without a man, it's difficult … First find a man, that anger is as a result of not having a man).

Yet again, the question of a female politician being unmarried becomes an issue. The suggestion made in the above tweet is that Khupe is sexually frustrated and thus requires a man in her life. What is referred to as her anger is in fact her contestation of the leadership of the opposition party upon the death of the leader of the Movement for Democratic Change, Morgan Tsvangirai. Such comments point to how female politicians are subjected to sexist comments within both cyberspace and the so-called offline world. In a Twitter thread, Linda Sibanyani, Harare East MP candidate, expressed how violence and online slurs towards women in the Zimbabwe political space were an indication that there is still a long way to be travelled in order to create safer spaces for aspiring female politicians to thrive.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have argued that the increased participation of women in politics will remain elusive if they have to perpetually deal with sexist harassment and bullying, online and offline. We are convinced though that social media, in spite of the vast opportunities that it offers politicians, remains a space in which women continue to face misogynist and sexist backlash. Even though there exist different forms of legislative measures that seek to protect different internet users, these remain largely ineffective in patriarchal societies where women are infantilised and considered incapable of holding positions of power, especially if they are unmarried.

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More work certainly needs to be done to examine the manner in which women can make use of social media and other online spaces for political purposes. There is also a need for further research to closely examine the way in which sexist discourses and narratives are framed in social media spaces. Such research will allow for an understanding and appreciation of the work that needs to be done to create spaces in which women have fuller participation in politics. If sexism has adapted to new media, it is imperative to understand how it can be dealt with in creating spaces, both offline and online, in which different citizens regardless of their gender or sex can actively and fully participate in politics and decision-making.

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CHAPTER 5

Young People, Social Media, and Political Participation. The Limits of Discursive (In)Civility in the Kenyan Context

Martin N. Ndlela

Introduction

Social media are dynamic, complex, communicative systems that enhance participatory cultures, relational connections, and sharing. Social media are having a profound effect on the young people's everyday life in Africa, and yet their impact on political communication and social change are yet to be fully understood. The young people's everyday communicative practices are now conducted in various social media arenas that are increasingly becoming key sites for engaging in relational activities and discussions. The growing availability of low-cost smartphone devices and the affordable rates of data connectivity mean that more and more young people in Africa, and Kenya in particular, have access to social interaction technologies, "referring

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to an assortment of Internet-based tools and techniques aimed at initiating, maintaining, sharing, and distributing interactive and collaborative activities and spaces online" (Dumova, 2009). Smartphone devices provide a broad spectrum of applications, services, and utilities for social networking, social interaction, blogging, and podcasting. These utilities also enable possibilities for sharing, interaction, and collaboration. The mobile device has emerged as a platform of choice for millions of users across Kenya, with its multifaceted uses including mobile money and social media functions.

As new social media uptakes increase in Kenya, they open up new possibilities and opportunities for young people—opportunities for networking, political action, friendship, romances, learning, recreation, and entertainment (Kelshaw & Lemesianou, 2010). The increasing use of social media is changing the way in which political communication takes place. In political communication research, it has been argued that the social media enables unlimited opportunities for political engagement—organizing across boundaries (geographic, democratic, and contextual boundaries). Ogola (2015) has noted how the new web-enabled communication infrastructure has made possible the broadening of the public sphere, encouraging public participation in news. His work on Kenya explores how the social media platforms such as Twitter enable and encourage public participation in wider national conversations. With these visible changes, there is an optimistic view that the social media will play a central role in addressing a range of social issues by liberating, empowering, enabling participation and engagement in political issues. Social media offers limitless discursive spaces that offer possibilities for critical discussions about issues of common public interests. The influence of social media on political engagement is determined by the discursive opportunity structures afforded by the context. This chapter examines the question of whether new media, and social media in particular, provide free and equal access to political participation, providing an opening for voices that are not normally heard in the Kenyan political spaces. What role does social media play in promoting or reducing new forms of youth-led engagement?

Prospects for Digital Participation

Researchers have for long debated whether new information and communication technologies mitigate or reinforce citizen's political and civic participation. As Hoffmann, Aeschlimann, and Lutz (2014) have noted, there is a strand of research that offer a *utopian* perspective on the prospects

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presented by new technologies. This perspective claims that the Internet enables political engagement; it reduces time and effort needed to access political information, and it promotes political engagement. As Wellman, Quan-Haase, Witte, and Hampton (2001) note, utopians have claimed that the Internet provides new and better ways of communication, whereas dystopians have argued that the Internet takes people away from their communities and families. The most prevalent view is that new information and communication technologies (ICTs) have the potential to support democracy by providing new forums for political deliberation (Papacharissi, 2004). Within democratic theory, public deliberation is seen as a foundation of the democratic process (Habermas, 1989a). Proponents of this view argue that online discourse will increase political participation. Castells (1996) argues that the Internet affects people's political participation by providing a new platform for debate and engagement. This view, as Hampton, Shin, and Lu (2017) note, assumes that access to new ICTs will provide opportunities for discussion among those who were previously silent and increase the overall volume of discourse around political issues. The increased availability and accessibility to social media has increased this perception. Social media is creating new forms of interactions, providing people with opportunities to chat on a one-to-one basis, one-to-many basis, in small groups, or in discussion groups. It increases possibilities for various types of social media communities that enable interpersonal communications. Social media provide a variety of alternative platforms for individual and groups alike to exchange information, messages, ideas on various issues, including political issues. Some of these are open platforms, where anyone can post something such as public Facebook walls, while others are closed communities. The amount of information available on social media and the sharing culture enables increased access to political information. Social media communities also provide social network interactions. Some of these communities have open membership while others are closed. Membership in the communities allows for different forms of participation through posting new material, reading other's postings, or expressing one's opinion or feedback. The communities hence allow users to exchange expressions with 'friends' they have never met or might never meet face to face. Therefore, in many ways social media has afforded various opportunities for democratic participation.

Whatever the perspectives, there is however no doubt that new information and communication technologies continue to influence communication patterns, with both positive and negative consequences on

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democratic processes. What is unclear is the implication of online deliberations on offline participation and vice versa. As Hampton et al. (2017) argue, social media may provide a new forum for deliberation but negatively affect willingness to engage in political conversations offline. There is also a range of factors that affect an individual's willingness to participate in political deliberations. Participation is also relative.

Dimensions of Democratic Participation

The concept of participation is today central for many kinds of research and uses. Democracy is one of the key sites of the articulation of the concept of participation because of its concern with the inclusion of the people within political decision-making processes (Carpentier, 2011). Different models of democracy emphasize different degrees of participation, involvement, and processes of deliberation. Participation in democracy is aptly captured in Brady's (1997, p. 737) definition of political participation as "any activity of ordinary citizens with the aim of influencing the political outcomes." Political participation encompasses all those activities by private citizens that are more or less directly aimed at influencing the selection of governmental personnel and/or the actions they take (Verba & Nie, 1987).

Carpentier (2011) identifies two dimensions of political participation, a minimalist and a maximalist democratic participation. In the minimalist dimension, participation is limited to elite selection and focuses mainly on macro-participation. In the maximalist dimension, there is an attempt to maximize participation by combining both macro- and micro-participation. Macro-participation relates to participation in the entire polis while micro-participation relates to the spheres of family and workplace. For Carpentier (2011) 'minimal' participation arises in situations of high power imbalance when a small powerful group controls access to media and 'maximal' participation arises in situations of relative power equity when no party monopolizes media and access is widely available. Social media is decentralized; hence, it is best suited for 'maximal' participation. There has been growing optimism that social media will enhance participatory democracy. As Literat et al. observe, the new media is an arena in which youth are developing and experimenting with many aspects of their lives, from social relations, to civic and political engagement. Digital media offer many youth the opportunity to engage in more complex forms of digital participation.

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Even though social media creates these possibilities of online participation, some research shows that a marginal percentage of individuals contribute to online discussions and the majority are lurkers (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2016; Jones, Ravid, & Rafaeli, 2004). In their research, Jones et al. (2004) attribute the lack of participation to information overload arguing that users are more likely to generate simpler responses as the overloading of mass interaction grows. Lack of participation arguably undermines e-democracy, which builds on civic participation to create a vibrant and pluralistic deliberation. Participation in political issues is also determined by the preexisting participatory culture. Jenkins, Purushotma, Clinton, Weigel, and Robinson (2006) define a participatory culture as a culture with relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement and strong support for creating and sharing one's creations. It is also a culture in which members believe their contributions matter. Forms of participatory culture include formal and informal membership to online communities such as Facebook, as well as collaborative problem-solving platforms.

Research has shown some gap between the aspirations of e-democracy initiatives and the actual levels of public participation. For example, Perez (2013) notes the limits of Internet in fostering democratic engagement, highlighting the dissonance between the transformative power of technology and the actual achievements in democratic engagement. There are however other narratives that highlight the capacity of the new media to facilitate enriched and extensive democratic processes (Perez, 2013). These focus on the inherent potential of the new technologies. The emergence of the Internet and the plethora of new information and communication technologies (ICTs) associated with it have raised hopes that the Internet could reinvigorate the democratic experience. Central to e-democracy is the hope of free and equal access to political debates. However, experiences with online discourse challenge this view (Albrecht, 2006). There are other factors inhibiting participation, be they psychological factors (Amichai-Hamburger et al., 2016) or the digital divide. In the African context, there remain a myriad of barriers to digital participation such as connectivity, the price of data bundles, costs, mobile coverage, and other means of social control including (in)civility.

Discursive (In)Civility

Civility has always been considered a requirement for democratic discourse, where it is valued as an indicator of a functional democratic society

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(Papacharissi, 2004). Discussions on the meaning of citizenship, democracy, and public discourse highlight civility as a virtue (Ibid.) Habermas' (1989a, 1989b) conceptualization of an ideal public sphere is characterized by a rational critical discussion. As such "civil conversation may indeed be the soul of democracy, provided that we do not impose stringent rules on discussion, and expect a discourse that is so polite and restrained that it is barely human" (Papacharissi, 2004, p. 266). The challenge is finding a benchmark to what is considered civil. Civility is a fluid concept and scholars agree that finding an acceptable definition of civility is not possible. As Benson (2011, p. 22) notes, the communicative, rhetorical practices of civility and incivility are always situational and contestable. Benson further argues that civility is determined by the local culture: what is normal in public discussion in some places is rude in others.

Kenski et al. (2018) observe that what most definitions do share is the notion that civility connotes a discourse that does not silence or derogate alternative views but instead shows respect. For Sobieraj and Berry (2011) civility involves a political argumentation characterized by speakers who present themselves as reasonable and courteous. On the other hand, incivility refers to "features of discussion that convey an unnecessarily disrespectful tone toward the discussion forum, its participants, or its topics" (Coe, Kenski, & Rains, 2014, p. 660). For Papacharissi (2004) incivility is disrespect for the collective traditions of democracy.

Several researchers agree that uncivil discourse is disturbing. Being a target of rude insults or remarks has a number of psychological effects on the recipients. Some people might shy away from sharing their views for fear of repercussions. Kenski et al. (2018) argue that just as incivility can be a tool of insurrection (e.g. in social movements, strikes, and demonstrations), it can be a means of marginalizing the powerless. Vrooman (2002) argues that online flaming "is an expression of cyberspace machismo which is often practiced more often against women and women's online groups as a kind of sexual harassment" (p. 53). Uncivil comments can be considered harmful, even though they also increase participation.

Methodology

The chapter is based on data collected through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted over a period of nine months in 2015 in the Eldoret region and a second batch of FGDs conducted over a period of two months in the Nakuru region. The target group for FGDs were college

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level youths (18–25 years). Participants were drawn from universities, colleges, and polytechnic colleges in Eldoret and in Nakuru. Most interviews were conducted by trained research assistants,[1] who were in the same age group as the participants (see Swart, Peters, & Broersma, 2018). In the majority of the FGDs, both male and female students participated, while in some discussions we employed gender-sensitive groups, in which FGDs consisted of either female or male students alone. By separating by sex, we wanted to understand differences in perspectives between males and females when it comes to political participation. However, we are aware of the limitations of Focus Group Discussions. Firstly, due to the limited number of participants involved in FGDs, the information obtained from the discussion cannot be generalized to the greater population. During interactions in the discussions, some participants might adopt the views that are predominant in the group, hence suppressing individual feelings.

Findings and Discussions

In Kenya, young people constitute a large part of the entire electorate. In the 2017 elections, for example, of the total number of registered voters, 51% of them were youth aged 18–35.[2] This demographic group is a vital part of the electoral democracy. At the same time, statistics also show that the young generation up to 25 years is not actively engaged in election-related activities (ibid.). The increasing use of social media is changing the way in which youth participation in political matters takes place. With these visible changes, there is an optimistic view that the social media will play a central role in addressing a range of social issues by liberating, empowering, enabling participation and engagement in political issues. Young people are the biggest users of social media and as such more exposed to political campaign messages. What are the implications of this upsurge in social media use on youth political participation?

Social Media as News Sources

For young people in Kenya, social media are increasingly becoming a primary source of news in relation to other sources. This reflects the growing popularity of social media as avenues for news in the Kenyan context, where the culture of news consumption is also changing. Sharing news on social media is a growing aspect of social media cultures. News on social media is easily accessible compared to, say, mainstream media, where issues

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of costs, time, and availability play a role. Sharing news on social media is a form of inviting conversations around the shared elements. Shared news also becomes an easy topic for conversation. In this way, news becomes embedded in everyday life. One discussant even noted how "some people do not follow news or read newspapers they just depend on social media to get information" (FGD 30.11.2016 GDC). This phenomenon is noted by Swart et al. (2018), who argue that social media platforms are an increasingly dominant medium through which people encounter news in everyday life. This is also evident in the Kenyan context. However, social media are rarely the only gateway to news but, for many, they have become a fixed component of their daily media repertoires (Nielsen & Schrøder, 2014).

Social media is the alternative source of news. As one informant puts it,

> To some point social media is good because … it tells citizens like us who don't watch television what is happening in the country. We get our news from social media. It really enlightens us on what is happens out there … we see graft everyday so we will be able to vote for something according since we now have the information. (FGD Ladies, 30.11.16 (Egerton University))

To some, social media is the main source of information, while others use social media as a supplementary source, to offset the limitations of the mainstream media. As one participant argued:

> I think our media fails us most of the time. I think they filter too much, they exaggerate, they make things unreal, they don't bring everything to the table, but when you go to social media you get more information, then you can come up with the true full story. But when you depend on conventional media you will get half the story. (FGD Ladies, 30.11.16 (Egerton University))

Social media as part of the media ecology in Kenya is an important source for accessing and engaging with news.

Youth as 'Influencers'

A social media influencer is a user of social media who has established credibility or expertise in a particular topic, has a large audience, and can persuade others by virtue of their reach. Influencers make regular posts

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about their preferred subject. An influencer can via their posts, blogs, and social networks (including offline) reach those areas that a politician may not be able to. Young people in general serve as influencers in political communication. In societies like Kenya most youths have access to more political news than their parents or grandparents do. Hence, politicians reach out to young people with the hope of also getting their messages to their parents and grandparents. As one discussant noted:

> Politicians are using the social media to address the youth who should go to the old people and pass the message. For instance, my grandmother at home does not know what is happening (FGD Ladies, 30.11.16 (Egerton University))

Some politicians recruit young people who are influencers, in order to disseminate their messages to as many youth as possible and to get more coverage on different social media platforms. These recruits distribute positive campaign messages on behalf of their handlers and defend them in the discussion forums. Bloggers with large followings are the most notable influencers in the Kenyan context. As one discussant argued, "some politicians who have more money than others get bloggers to blog positive things about them in order to influence the masses" (FGD Male, 24.11.16). Influencers attract attention toward a candidate or political party. Very often, "when the social media focuses on one character or issue pertaining one candidate, then it attracts attention from a large audience which benefits the party or the candidate in question" (FGD 30.11.16 GDC). It should be noted however that not all influencers are motivated by money. Some influencers are motivated by other factors such as ethnic allegiance, passion for the topic, and any other motivational factor.

Since the youth also share the same social media platforms with political leaders, some are also using the same platforms to reach out to their leaders. One discussant mentioned how she uses the social media to raise issues affecting her community:

> For me I use social media to get our issues addressed. For example back at homes there was a time when a transformer blew and for like a week nothing was happening so I contacted our MP through social media and informed him about by the lack of electricity in our area and after a day a new transformer was installed. (FGD Ladies, 30.11.16 (Egerton University))

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The youth have a huge presence on social media, making them important conduits in the mediation of political communication. As one discussant aptly puts it, "the youth are addicts to social media … they are all over social media … and the best way to reach them is through it" (FGD Ladies, 30.11.16 (Egerton University)). Compared to the previous elections, social media is now a big player in the Kenyan electoral process.

Active and Passive Political Participation

With the increased availability of smart mobile phones and social media connectivity, there is an optimistic perception that social media will galvanize participation. However, participation comes in various forms, from active to passive. Kelty et al. (2015) note that participation can be interpreted broadly: from highly skilled time-consuming forms of participation to low-effort or even no-effort forms such as making a comment on a blog and tagging a document with a keyword. From the discussions, it emerged that there are different patterns of political participation. We wanted to know why some youth are more active in social media discussions than others. As one discussant said, "I use Facebook, I like politics so much. When something is posted concerning politics, I comment and follow" (FGD male, 24.11.16) and another discussant added: "I comment on contemporary issues e.g. corruption, graft, social evils those that affect or center on a large audience … If a story is trending I comment on it" (FGD 30.11.16 GDC).

The discussants also compared the participatory dimensions of social media to the limitations in mainstream media.

> As opposed to TV and radio where you are a passive listener social media gives you an opportunity to speak your mind. So here we're talking about millions of Kenyans talking about how they feel and putting it in Twitter handles, which everybody is tweeting about and adding salt to injury, creating discussions and more pressure mounted on the culprits. I think you have to be made of stone to not feel it. (FGD Ladies, 30.11.16 (Egerton University))

These observations give credence to what Carpentier (2011) has called a maximalist democratic participation. Social media has a potential for expanding the spheres of democratic participation. There are, however, variations in the use of different social media platforms like Facebook,

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Twitter, and WhatsApp. For some discussants, political participation takes place in small, closed groups, especially on WhatsApp. As the following discussants puts it:

> I also rarely comment on Facebook but on WhatsApp and Instagram I am more participative. (FGD 30.11.16 L)

> I am also not politically interested and even if I was I also would not post or comment on anything in Facebook, I would prefer WhatsApp it's more private. (FGD Ladies, 30.11.16 (Egerton University))

During the discussions, we noted that there are some who steer away from political discussions altogether. As these discussants puts it,

> No, I am not so much into politics hence not an active participant. (FGD 30.11.16 GDC)

> I am a passive member, I just read and follow posts but I do not comment. (FGD 30.11.16 GDC)

> I don't give my opinions on Facebook I just use it to see what people are talking about, on Twitter I rarely use it maybe once a year. (FGD Ladies, 30.11.16 (Egerton University))

These are what Amichai-Hamburger et al. (2016) refer to as lurkers, who browse discussion without actively contributing to them. There has been a debate amongst researchers as to whether lurking is a form of participation. Smith, Sturgies, and Nomura (2009) argue that lurkers are in fact participating in deliberation when they read others' comments because a large part of rational discussion consists of reflecting on others' opinions. There are several reasons why some people chose to be lurkers. On the whole, we can say opportunities for participation are there in social media, but there are other extenuating circumstances that diminish the degree of participation. Incivility is one of these factors.

Incivility: Hate Speech, Sexism, and Ethnicity

While acknowledging that social media has opened many opportunities for political participation, we also noted that that potential is contextually driven. Levels of (in)civility have several limitations on young people's

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political debate. Kenya has a long and painful history of incivility in its political discourse, which rose to high levels as the uptake of new ICTs (SMS messages, online forums, bulletin boards, blogs, and later social media) expanded, reaching an apex during the 2007 elections. Political debate and elections in Kenya often took place in a hostile environment, marked with polarization, ethnic divisions, and intense competition. The post-2007 election violence left more than a 1000 people dead, many wounded, and more than half a million displaced. The violence was exacerbated by hate speeches in both mainstream and social media (Benesch, 2014; Mäkinen & Wangu Kuira, 2008; Somerville, 2011). As social media users took sides in the conflict, the political debate became tense. There were cases where social media was used to mobilize vigilantes, spreading rumors and sending threats to enemies. There were also positive uses of social media where users implored one another to maintain peace and unity. The 2007 post-election violence prompted the government of Kenya to enact the 2008 National Cohesion and Integration Act.[3] However, there is acute fear that violence might erupt again during future elections. The memories of the 2007 violence still linger in the minds of many, who shy away from any content likely to inflame Kenyans. As one discussant puts it:

> People react differently in our country. Politics is a very sensitive, like in the case of 2007. Everything you say or post on social media platform can be used against you. If your opinion is contrary to popular belief then your comments or posts can land you in trouble. People are very cautious of what they put out there because they do not want to get into trouble. (FGD 30.11.2016 GDC)

> Personally I do not react to election results but I think elections are very sensitive and your opinion can affect a group and the reactions may be a threat in various capacities. (FGD 30.11.16 GDC)

From the first statement above, one can deduce two limitations to participation. The first is the cautious approach to expressing one's opinion that might be deemed contrary to popular belief (whether right or wrong). The second is the fear of reprisals, as posts can land you in trouble with authorities or with other peers in the social media platform. From the second utterance, we deduce the element of sensitivity toward other social groups, whose reaction can be detrimental. Another discussant put this

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limitation in another way, citing the fear of being judged and incivility that might befall one:

> I guess most of these political things are posted on social media … you can see them but not comment. Because everything you say people will judge you based on your comments about a certain issue. And sometimes it becomes bad. You might be insulted just for giving your thoughts about an issue. (FGD 30.11.16 GDC)

There is notable presence of fear of reprisals for expressing one's opinion on issues. Respondents admitted that their lack of participation was due to their fear of getting inappropriate responses, or encountering negative responses. Not having confidence to post, inability to formulate proper responses, and the fear of reprisals lead some youths to the status of being silent observers. One respondent mentioned how she/he used to be active in discussion but later changed that after an episode:

> I used to [participate] then I stopped because it got twisted. The discussions became more of animosity than any constructive thing. If I have an opinion, I would rather talk about it with someone personally other than put it in public. I just see the posts, read other people's comments, then leave it at that. (FGD Ladies, 30.11.16 (Egerton University))

Aggression toward certain opinions is a tactic used to silence those with opposing viewpoints. It can be done by like-minded mobs, hired individuals, influencers, trolls, or cyberbullies. As noted by the discussants:

> I tend to think the social media and the internet is a scary place, there is a lot of cyber bullying out there … For example you can post your opinion then you log out when you log back in, your post has gone viral everyone has a harsh opinion about what you said and it's been twisted turning it into a much bigger thing than what you had intended. (FGD Ladies, 30.11.16 (Egerton University))

> On social media when you reply to something when you're from a different tribe, people will abuse you and no action will be taken against them. (FGD Ladies, 30.11.16 (Egerton University))

One discussant expressed the fear of being followed up, "you can't post anything because you can be tracked or followed up" (FGD 30.11.16

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GDC). This sense of vulnerability in social media is also captured by another discussant who argued that there is a perception that one can get away with anything online, “most people don’t care, they just comment anything. I don’t think there is a structured disciplinary action. People get away with anything.”

However, for some there have been some notable improvements on the nature of discussions and the degree of incivility is waning:

> For now people do not post anything, there are more educated and more careful on what they say on social media since they are afraid of the repercussions and consequence that they may face but there are those who don’t care they will just say anything. (FGD 30.11.16 GDC)

The fear of legal repercussions for abusing social media was brought up by the discussants. In particular, the discussants pointed to the case of a fellow Moi University student who had just been arrested and sent to jail for improper social media postings. As one discussants aptly put it: “I don’t want to end up like Allan Wadi” (FGD 09/2015 Moi University). A Moi University student, Allan Wadi Okengo, using the social media alias Lieutenant Wadi, was in 2015 given a two-year jail sentence for posting on his Facebook pages hate speech remarks and unprintable insults against President Uhuru Kenyatta. In his postings he wrote amongst other abusive remarks and name-calling: “*Uhuru Kenyatta must be killed, whether by fate or hate!*” He also posted statements that the President’s Kikuyu ethnic group should be confined to certain parts of the country.[4] When sentencing him the magistrate noted, “the offence is serious and a deterrent penalty is called for to serve as a warning to others abusing the social forums.”[5] Okengo served six months before being released following an appeal. The postings and the arrests became a matter of intense discussion on social media, with mixed reactions on Okengo’s posts, the government’s reaction, and the court process. On a Twitter thread, #AllanWadiJAILED one compared Okengo’s vitriolic language to other bloggers, who have, however, not been arrested for their actions:

> There’s notorious blogger (Mugo Wairimu) who has on several occasions called for assassination of CORD leaders. He is FREE #AllanWadiJAILED (@KinyanBoy, 02.01.15)

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> One MP Kuria posted how certain communities should be swept away. Wasn't that more of threat to security than Wadi's #AllanWadiJAILED (@KinyanBoy, 02.01.15)

> @DrKhalifNasser @RobertAlai I know but am so afraid to tweet about it now #AllanWadiJAILED these are hard times (@jkimosop, 02.01.15)

In spite of their abusive and derogatory nature, the postings generated a significant number of likes within a short space of time, which according to the FGD discussants is an indication that they were "people who were feeling the same but feared to raise the issue" (ibid.).

This shows that "what one individual perceives as uncivil discourse may be regarded by another as innocuous, owing to the divergent interpretations, expectations and values" (Brokensha & Conradie, 2017). It also depends on who is targeted by uncivil commentaries.

Conclusion

Social media as technology offers limitless opportunities for youth participation in political discussion. The Focus Group Discussions reveal, however, that the sociocultural context of use and the psychological factors are a major determining element. The pervasiveness of incivility in social media instills fear and anxiety in some social media users and arguably impedes the democratic ideal of deliberation. It is therefore important for one to go beyond instrumental approaches to the study on the affordance and utility of social media, as this approach does not capture the complexities of "social media as culturally constituted discursive spaces" (Motion, Heath, & Leitch, 2015). As individual views on social, political, economic, and relational matters are shared and considered, they become embodied in cultural zones of meaning in which engagements or disengagement occurs. Cultural zones of meaning guide social media users when they share perspectives, values, and actions (Motion, Heath & Leitch). It can therefore be concluded that whilst social media facilitates digital political participation, its use is contextually determined. The extent of incivility in social media platforms undermines the potential of the social media.

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Notes

1. The first set of interviews in Eldoret area were conducted by Catherine Kamua and Doreen Chumba, both students at Moi University, Eldoret, Kenya. The second set of interviews in the Nakuru area were conducted by Doreen Chumba.
2. https://medium.com/@DataSciencing/the-demographics-of-the-kenyan-voter-cba038cbbb02 and https://edition.cnn.com/2017/08/02/africa/kenya-election-youth-vote/index.html.
3. https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-net/2017/kenya.
4. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-30658461 (accessed 07.12.18).
5. http://www.monitor.co.ke/2015/01/22/university-student-allan-wadi-gets-2-years-jail-term-for-hate-speech-on-facebook/ (accessed 07.12.18).

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CHAPTER 6

Youth, Elections and Social Media: Understanding the Critical (Di)Stance Between Young People and Political Party Messaging

Vanessa Malila and Noko Pela

Introduction

In 2015 and 2016 Rhodes University in South Africa was awash with political tension and activities. The University had been the scene of radical protests and demands for change by students. The #RhodesMustFall (#RMF), the #FeesMustFall (#FMF) and the #RUReferenceList protests at Rhodes University started debates, conversations and public lectures amongst students and staff on and off social media on aspects of decoloniality, transformation, free education, issues of safety on campus and gender-based violence (Gush, 2015). The year 2016 was also the year of seismic shifts during the local government elections in South Africa, including where the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party saw itself lose key urban municipalities to smaller parties. However, very little

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of the turmoil within the higher education sector and the protests around education transformation were reflected in the election campaigns of political parties and seemingly in student engagement with political processes. The three biggest political parties in South Africa, and the only ones that contested Ward 12 (Rhodes University) ANC, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and the Democratic Alliance (DA), were active on social media directly engaging with constituents and drawing citizens to the polls. All the parties had former and current Rhodes University students as council candidates. There was substantial engagement by students on social media, on the Rhodes Student Representative Council (SRC) Facebook page and on Twitter. However, only 39% of registered students turned out to cast their vote on the election day (IEC, 2016b).

This chapter examines the interpretations and meaning-making amongst young people at Rhodes University, of the political party messages during the August 2016 local government elections (LGE) on social media. In addition, the study seeks to understand whether youth at Rhodes University actively sought out political party messages on social media (by following the ANC, DA, EFF Facebook and Twitter accounts), or whether the messages were incidental on their timelines (e.g. following news organisations). Finally, this chapter examines whether the social media messages resonated with them and spoke to the issues faced by young people on the campus.

Understanding the Context of the 2016 Local Government Elections

In order to understand the way in which young people related to social media messages during the August local government elections, it is important to first understand the political landscape prior to, and during, the 2016 local government elections. The ANC has dominated electoral politics since it came into power in 1994 (Boyce, 2010). In recent years, however, there has been a gradual decrease in support of Africa's oldest liberation movement. The ANC has been the majority party in the local government elections across South Africa, with the exception of the Western Cape and its municipalities. At least since the 2006 local government elections, the overall share of the votes nationally for the ANC decreased slightly from 65.7% in 2006 to 62.93% in 2011 (IEC, 2016a). This was amid growing discontent regarding the state of the country's economy and the perceived corruption and patronage within the party, particularly because of former President Jacob Zuma (Booysen, 2016). During the

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2016 local government elections, the ANC amassed just 54% of the electoral vote (Gosam, 2016). Suggestions for the decline in ANC support include the emergence of more relatable breakaway parties such as the EFF, dissatisfaction over lack of service delivery, apathy and limited voter education (Alexander, 2010; Gosam, 2016).

Political analysts declared these elections as the ANC's toughest to date (Essop, 2016). The ANC went into the 2016 elections on the back of a number of challenges—both internal and external. The internal challenges included factionalism and dissent among some members (Olifant, 2017). It was under this cloud of internal and external challenges that the ANC lost control of three metropolitan municipalities, namely the City of Tshwane (administrative capital), the City of Johannesburg (economic hub) and Nelson Mandela Bay, thus subsequently losing R130 billion in city budgets to Democratic Alliance-led coalitions (Mbatha, 2016). The DA was the biggest winner of the elections as the party achieved its best local electoral performance so far, while the first-time contender, the EFF, improved on its performance from the 2014 general election. Many analysts saw the LGE 2016 as a turning point in the political landscape of South Africa, as the dominance of the ANC at the polls was greatly reduced, while coalition governments became more widespread.

This study was based at Rhodes University, an institution which experienced protests in 2015 and 2016, centering on a number of issues, including free education,[1] decolonisation of the academic space and rape culture. Since these protests happened during the election year, it was important to this research to witness how political parties responded to these issues in their election campaigning on social media.

Scholars and commentators alike have conceptualised movements such as #RMF, #FMF and #RUReferenceList as internet-age networked student movements, because of the manner of communication between students and other interested parties on networks such as Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp, which signalled a new way of mobilising and organising student political power (Luescher and Klemenčič in Luescher, Loader, & Mugume, 2017). Facebook and Twitter operate as a digital counter-public sphere, that is, a virtual hall where people gather around certain issues outside mediation by traditional media or the ruling class (Bosch, 2017; Mpofu, 2017). Content on these sites, especially on Twitter, is usually discussed through hashtags (#) that precede a word or phrase, so that interested parties and stakeholders alike can screen relevant issues. The hashtag becomes the imagined virtual hall where debates from local and

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national contributors come together through the online conversation (Bosch, 2017; Mpofu, 2017). Bosch (2017, p. 224) argues that although the role of the internet[2] in protests such as the Arab Spring is contested, one thing that is clear is how social media has facilitated protest participation by increasing opportunities for engagement in collective action in the student-led protests in South Africa.

The starting point of the wave of protests that would engulf higher education institutions was when Chumani Maxwele smeared excrement on the statue of British imperialist Cecil John Rhodes[3] at the University of Cape Town (UCT), on 9 March 2015, in protest against Rhodes' racism and his legacy at UCT. His act of defiance would be what scholar Pillay (2016) called the tipping point of not only a national, but an international call for the decolonisation of higher education institutions, captured by the expression #RhodesMustFall (#RMF). According to the group, the fall of Rhodes is symbolic for the inevitable fall of white supremacy and privilege at the UCT campus. The #RMF message resonated with students as far away as in Edinburgh, California and Oxford in the United Kingdom (Oxlund, 2016). Black students, with experiences of racial discrimination, marginalisation and insensitivity at Oxford University, found it easy to identify with the movement, and the need to do away with symbols of colonialism and white supremacy, and that there should be improvement in the representation of "black voices".

The #RhodesMustFall movement was the catalyst in the establishment of the #FMF student protests against an increase in university tuition fees in October 2015 (Bosch, 2017). #RMF started at UCT, while #FMF, which started at the University of Witwatersrand (Wits), was more of a national student-led protest against the soaring fees of higher education institutions (Bosch, 2017). Scholars and political analysts have called the #FMF movement the biggest student protest in post-apartheid South Africa since the 1976 Soweto Uprising[4] (Maughan, 2015; Oxlund, 2016).

The #RUReferenceList was a protest that began at Rhodes University in mid-April 2016. It was in response to a list of 11 Rhodes students accused of sexual assault on social media (posted initially on the RU Queer Confessions and Crushes Facebook page, and later posted on UCKAR[5] Facebook). This sparked angry protests and demonstrations across the campus. The protests raised several issues, including safety issues on campus, lack of visibility of campus protection, sexual assault allegedly by fellow students (and cases that were not prosecuted as a result of University proctors talking students into dropping cases), rape

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culture, apathy towards survivors of sexual assault by management and the Rhodes University community, and a call for perpetrators to be expelled from Rhodes (Carlisle & Macgregor, 2016; Seddon, 2016). Just like other protests, the #RUReferenceList spread to a few other universities with calls for an end to gender-based violence.

Social Media Messaging and the Complexity of Hegemonic Reading

Election campaigns are different ways by which political parties and candidates present their ideas and positions on societal matters (e.g. on how to tackle unemployment, land issues, or the lack of housing) to the electorate during the period before elections. Most often, apart from political rallies, political parties use different platforms to reach their stakeholders and citizens, such as posters, traditional media (television, radio, newspapers) and social network sites (Facebook and Twitter). Voters then choose and ultimately vote for the contender whose policy positions most closely mirror their own set of preferences (Bratton, 2008, p. 621). However, it is rare for readers to simply conform to accepting the desired meaning of political party messages in exactly the way they were intended by the political party.

The research for this chapter uses Hall's Encoding/Decoding model of communication in which media messages are open and polysemic (i.e. any text has multiple meanings rather than a single meaning). Hall suggests that audiences actively read media texts, rather than accepting them passively; they interpret the media text according to their own cultural background, economic standing and personal experiences (Hall, 1980). Hall proposed that media messages pass through multiple phases of transformation during the reception process, from original production phase to interpretation phase. While Hall suggests three hypothetical positions on which audiences decode and in which meaningful discourse may be constructed (Hall, 1980, p. 136), what is clear from the findings is that often audience readings do not fit neatly into any one category. As a result, they are polysemous, complex and highly dependent on class, race, position and personal circumstance. The young people in this research illustrated that their (di)stance in relation to political party messages depended on their ability to be critical of those messages and that while they were aware of the meaning being conveyed, they were also able to decode that meaning in many different ways.

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While Hall is useful in understanding the complexity of reading political messages, Schrøder felt that the encoding/decoding model misses some of the readings or rather dimensions because of its sole focus on "polysemy" and "preferred reading". He makes the claim that the preferred meaning, as articulated in Hall (1980), cannot be regarded as a "property of text", raising questions about whose reading is the legitimate, preferred reading: is it the one intended by the producer or the one decoded by the receiver (Schrøder, 2000)? Also, he argued that polysemy cannot solely be the feature of the connotative level of meaning. As such, Schrøder is useful in further understanding the multiplicity of possible readings of a text or message and provides a practical lens through which to examine the meanings made of political party messages by South African youth.

Methodology

This study employed a qualitative approach, which sought to understand the ways Rhodes University students thought, made meaning and interpreted their social contexts and how they relate to election campaigns in the political context at the time. The aim of this research was to understand the "insider perspectives" of a particular social group (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, p. 271). It is basically to make sense of and interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings that people make and bring to them (Denzil & Lincoln, 1994).

For this study, six focus group discussions (FGD) were conducted. There were no rules in terms of arranging groups according to race, religion, class and so on. The composition of the focus groups was what Curtis and Curtis (2011) termed "affinity groups". Affinity groups were preferred in this study as it allowed the participants to be comfortable with each other (that enhances the interaction). Affinity groups are people who may know each other, and they spoke frankly about their interpretation of media content on the political party messages (Curtis & Curtis, 2011, p. 109; Mabweazara, 2006). The researcher tried to ensure that the participants are representative, at least of the racial make-up of students at Rhodes, because South Africa is a multiracial and diverse nation, so it is important to engage every racial profile as citizens and more importantly as students in this institution, especially on matters of politics. The make-up of the student body is 71% black (62% African, 4% Coloured and 5% Indian/Asian students) and 29% white (Masiza, 2017). The researcher

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had broken down the make-up of the 43 participants to 73% African, 4% coloured, 2% Indian/Asian and 21% white participants.

Given that this study is of a qualitative nature, the researcher chose purposive sampling of the focus group participants using the snowball sampling method to select both the data sample and the participants. Purposive sampling represents a group of different non-probability sampling techniques. This technique is also known as judgemental, selective or subjective sampling. Purposive sampling relies on the judgement of the researcher when it comes to selecting the units (e.g. people, cases/organisations, events, pieces of data) that are to be studied. Usually, the sample being investigated is quite small, especially when compared with probability sampling techniques (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine, & Newbold, 1998).

Common to all qualitative sampling procedures is that the selection of sample units is consciously shaped by the research agenda (Deacon, Pickering, Golding, & Murdock, 1999). For this study, the agenda is to understand and account for audience responses to political party messages on social media. The sample is primarily Rhodes University undergraduate and postgraduate students who have been at Rhodes since the beginning of 2015 or before and who would have experienced the wave of the #RhodesMustFall, #FeesMustFall and #RUReferenceList protests on the Rhodes campus. Whether students voted or did not vote in the local government elections is not a sampling factor. Eligible students had to have access to a smartphone, tablet or laptop that allowed for easy access to social network sites during the election period. In addition to general questions during the focus groups related to the election campaigns and messages on social media, participants were also shown a range of different social media messages during the focus groups in order to remind them of the types of messages that were prevalent during the local government elections. This allowed the focus group discussions to be focused on specific issues related to the broader party campaigns, for example, the use of Nelson Mandela's image by the DA.

Findings and Discussion

There are a number of factors that serve to connect participants with the media texts. The three that came out the most were "personal interest", "community" and "reminiscence" (something in the message reminding the reader of people or life experiences). What is evident is that many of the participants are social media enthusiasts and fanatics, which made the

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initial step of the study easier, meaning they did not need much to motivate them to be online. For the great majority of the participants, an interest in social media, in addition to their personal motivations, meant that they were coming across the latest media messages regarding local government elections on social media. The consensus among the groups is that most of the participants spend so much time on social media that they came across and engaged with the media messages. One responded thus:

> I'm a social media guru. So I'm always switching between Twitter and Facebook. I find that Twitter is more current and Facebook lately, and then, was very depressing. Even the stuff that is generated on Facebook is nothing like what is generated on Twitter. So, I switch between both of them, now and then.

The students went as far as to say that even when they are busy with academic work, they always ensure that they are logged into their social media networks:

> I'm on my phone, on Twitter, Facebook, even when I'm working. So it's most of the time, I'm switching between both of them most of the time. So, maybe I'll do a paragraph of an assignment and then switch back onto Twitter to see what's happening. (Tuelo)[6]

Amogelang concurred with both participants about her social media habits: "I was reporting on those elections for a course, so I was on Twitter live tweeting a lot, … almost every hour leading up to the actual elections and Facebook once a day." While they may not have all been actively seeking out campaign messages, they came across them anyway because they are on social media so much.

While research has indicated that young people are apathetic towards politics and elections (Harris, Wyn, & Younes, 2010: 10), the focus group discussions revealed that the research participants are young people on social network sites, and are actually "motivated" and interested in South African politics. One thing became clear: most of the young people at Rhodes were following the elections with keen interest. Kgosi said: "On Twitter I follow most political parties, not in the sense that I follow the accounts, but I go back and forth checking. I follow the predominant leaders (or the most visible leaders) and the news media accounts." Brutus concurred with Kgosi, saying: "I follow EFF, DA and ANC. and I also

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follow the leaders of all these parties. I'll get the news directly from them and I'll supplement that with news from news websites like eNCA, SABC, EWN."

In terms of relevance of the social media messages, one can understand this in relation to the motivation dimension adopted by Schrøder, whereby the "link of relevance" is between the reader's personal universe and the universe perceived to be presented by the text (and the situation surrounding its consumption) (Schrøder, 2000, p. 245). This means that for a reader to feel that a text is relevant or for them to relate to a text, it has to fulfil a few factors, namely, having a personal interest in the subject matter of the media text and the "community" feeling (feeling of belonging in the textual universe). The focus groups showed that there were a range of different motivations amongst the young people for being online. Some came across these political party messages because they spent a lot of much time on social media, they could not miss them. Others were deeply passionate about politics, following political leaders on social media and the Facebook and Twitter accounts of the political parties. For other groups, they found it important to keep themselves abreast of news related to the election, simply because they knew the people running in their Ward.

There were different readings and initial understandings of the media text by the participants. Fish argues (in Schrøder, 2000) that this is not uncommon, in fact he calls it "a relative unity amidst diversity of meaning that manifests itself in reception analyses as socially patterned readings". Schrøder understands comprehension as being influenced by a number of factors, including both macro-social factors (e.g. class) and micro-social/situational relations. He argues, "comprehension should therefore be understood as a decoding continuum from complete *divergence from* to complete *correspondence to* either the encoders' intended meanings or the readings produced by other recipients" (Schrøder, 2000, p. 246). This is not to say that the recipients have adopted what Hall calls oppositional reading of the text. It means that it is a case of polysemy on the reader's part. Polysemy simply refers to the co-existence of many possible meanings for a word or phrase. This means that readers are aware of the intention of the encoders even before receiving the media text. Therefore, even in interpretive communities, responses from participants can be of a polysemous nature.

This is evident in the manner the participants responded to a question on the visibility of candidate councillors for Ward 12 on social media

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(Mthobisi Buthelezi of the ANC, Darren Holm of the DA and Abongile James of the EFF). There were adverts of Buthelezi and Holm taken from Facebook, which were used in the focus groups to jog the memories and remind the participants of the election period. One participant responded like this:

> I remember I was very confused. I think both their campaigns were very lazy. Darren's was slightly more visible. Mthobisi had a late turnaround strategy. I do not know who his campaign advisors were but they did him dirty. I think his posters came out 5 days, if not the weekend before people were supposed to go to ballot box. He was MIA [missing in action]—as in the physical person was not in the Eastern Cape. It was just horrible. I think there was a debate between the candidates but people were not interested in going because they were not visible during the whole campaign season. (Roy)

> Mthobisi is a close friend of mine and he was part and parcel of the protests that took place here at school. He was also very active on social media. With the other ones there's nothing much to say, it's a wrap for them. (Thato)

> With the EFF, Abongile, was non-existent. With the ANC, Mthobisi, was very lazy. We did not even see him. He was okay. I think I saw him a lot of times, every time I was scrolling up. Even if he was active, I do not think that Mthobisi would have won. I think this university is filled with liberal people. He would not have emerged anyway. (Kagiso)

Schrøder argues that at times comprehension may not only be hard because of situational factors, but it can be divergent (2000, p. 247). As illustrated above with the comprehension in terms of the visibility of candidate councillors on social media, it is not uncommon for audience members to fail to engage with the media messages. Comprehension according to Schrøder should be understood in relation to a "decoding continuum, from a divergence from, to a correspondence to either the encoders' intended meanings or the readings produced by other audience members" (2000, p. 247).

Participants were asked whether they think that the candidate councillors used social media effectively to engage directly with RU students.

> No, I don't think so. For example, I didn't even know that these people were running. I knew that Rhodes University was a ward but I didn't know

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> that these were the people who were running until I saw the posters on campus. (Keabetswe)

Tebogo adopted a critical distance from the text (from immersion of the text), because he simply could not get the candidate councillors to respond to some of his questions personally. He said:

> I think what was lazy about them was that they had campaign teams answering questions on their behalf. So, you would see that someone would share a post and a question would be posed to the candidate representing the ward.

Here there is a critique of the lack of constructed and conscious messaging and engagement. Mjekejeke even doubted the candidate councillors because of what he termed "their inability to communicate and engage with students"; he continued,

> They could have done it better. I remember a post that Darren Holm wrote to the Rhodes SRC page and that was it, but a lot of people don't know how to engage with the students unless it's something big like a protest. I don't know how people can engage through social media here at Rhodes University, like engage and not just post something then carry on with life.

Shaka also noted a lack of communication from candidates on social media:

> I don't think they used it effectively because they didn't create these kind of spaces where solutions could be spoken about. It's a brilliant platform for elections to say 'these are my ideas, what are your thoughts?' That creates a space for students to engage with relevant issues to Rhodes. I don't think they spent their time hearing our voices and really doing what a democratic government should be doing. (Shaka)

> I remember seeing Abongile and Darren's pictures but they tell me nothing. If you are a person who is confused about where you lie and who to vote for, like nah they didn't use social media effectively at all. When I think about the potential and what it offers them, really not. (Bhekumuzi)

The focus group discussions showed that there are various reasons why readers take a critical distance against a text. For one group it was because of candidate councillors' lack of seriousness in communicating and engaging with their constituents. Another group felt that the candidate council-

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lors were hiding behind their campaign teams or Rhodes societies. The responses of focus group participants indicate that the participants were able to "discriminate" and critique the shortfall and (lack of) effectiveness of their friends, colleagues and university mates who stood as candidate councillors for Ward 12 (Rhodes University), and their media texts on social media. Schrøder states that such immersion and distancing from a text is a characteristic of "camp" or "ironic" reading found in campaign communication adverts, which the audience members can appreciate or completely ridicule, albeit in a "non-serious playful manner" (2000, p. 248).

In looking at the political messages, the researcher asked the focus group participants the type of messages they anticipated receiving as students on the Rhodes University campus, as well as students in higher education in general. Although they recognise the work put together by the candidate councillors to appeal to students in higher education, some felt the messages were not directed at them specifically as higher education students at Rhodes University.

> I don't think we are the target audience for political movements when they do their campaigning. It is so evident just in Parliament during #FeesMustFall. We all heard the #StudentsMustFall. That in itself is a reflection of how seriously students issues are taken in the political space. We are not the target audience, so I didn't expect anything. (Goodness)

Zachariah also did not want to take a subjective position because he feels that at the end of the day, politicians are all about rhetoric, not substance, and never for the good of the people. He said:

> I also didn't expect much from them. I expect very little from the political parties regarding students. They don't really have finances for much nowadays besides private jets and private cars to escort them. At the end of the day, we need to face the reality of things. And the reality is we do not have money because they do their own thing and enjoy the money themselves. So, I do not really expect much from them because all of these ads are really not targeted to us. It is targeted to the country as a whole to vote for them. (Zachariah)

While Goodness and Zachariah did not have expectations for the political campaign messages, others revealed what they did anticipate to see on Facebook and Twitter from political parties:

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> I was expecting the DA and the ANC to have a stance in their manifestos about what are the issues they will address in the ward experienced by students. I wanted them to have a stance on the name change, which is now a dead issue. I also expected a stance when it comes to sexual abuse and safety on campus, I still think it was too much of an expectation. (Kgosi)

Diamond had anticipated messages on student fees and decolonisation:

> I expected messages on bursaries and funding considering the protests that have occurred in prior years. I think the EFF to some degree came through with regards to that. I also expected the EFF, since they are focused on the youth, I think they've realised that the youth is the economic driver, if you target the youth as they are the ones generating revenue. So, I anticipated them addressing free education and poverty. (Diamond)

Sgaqagaqa agreed with the above comments on student fees and exclusion. In terms of his response (and the responses of the above participants), he has taken a negative attitude and position because the social media messages he expected were not addressed. He said:

> I anticipated them to address decolonisation since it's been an issue, and systematic exclusions on the basis of finances, withholding of results due to finances and safety issues around campus. Those are the things I thought they would focus on. (Sgaqagaqa)

The stance adopted by readers towards a media text should in essence be conceptualised as a "process of commuting" (2000). Agerholm-Andersen (2012, p. 217) states that readers have a "medium identification" with the media text in terms of their "position". He says that audience members move or commute between a positive and a negative stance towards the value of the media text in terms of their attitudinal responses. While the focus group participants were clear that their expectations were not met in the election campaign messages, it is also useful to understand whether those messages that were received were relevant to the students' lived challenges. Harriet said,

> EFF tried but because their whole party is based on economic freedom and so they had to jump on that access to free education as a form of campaigning. I think it would be a stupid move of them not to. I think they tried but I think that's the only thing they kind of addressed which is also then

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> another issue why there's a level of distrust. The other political parties, from my side, I don't think they even tried to engage with a lot of or if they did it was at a very superficial level. (Harriet)

> Ward 12 is Rhodes University and a lot of the students here are students that were taking part in the protests that had happened from 2015, and it's just too just disconnected for me. I don't think they could actually fully engage or connect to what the students were experiencing, especially in the times of the protests that were happening. It was just too disconnected. (T- Gom)

Despite some of the messages being tailored to Rhodes students, many of the FGD participants felt negatively towards them in their reception. They felt the messages were done randomly, incidentally or "by the way" (in passing). Other participants felt that the messages were not just directed at them but were actually country-specific tailored political party messages on social media.

> Students really don't seem to be the target market because they are addressing issues that are more country-based politically. It is not talking about issues that students are facing. It is actually not really acknowledged that students are people who are in the voting population, but there is nothing that people do to aim their campaign at that population. (Refilwe)

> To be quite honest, I think most of the messages spoke to national political agenda. I do not think that any of them really, in terms of the ones here at Rhodes, spoke to the issues here on campus. (Goldfinger)

Voicing his displeasure and unhappiness at the messages tailored for a national audience, Capt. Sthembiso expressed disappointment at the political parties for their approach to the campaigning, and he lauded the EFF as the only political party to make an effort in their campaigning. Furthermore, he believes that this was a missed opportunity by political parties using social media to speak directly and honestly to issues facing young people in South Africa. He argued that political parties can speak directly with young people and try to address some of their concerns in their campaign messaging. For example, at Rhodes University, issues relating to safety on campus, sexual abuse, high cost of higher education and

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so on were some of the issues that led to a radical campus which experienced protests from students.

One focus group indicated that they did not expect any sort of messages from political parties because of the negative character in which they describe the political parties and their messages as "only rhetoric" and "self-enriching". These descriptions are not an acceptance nor a rejection of the media text. Instead, they indicate the adoption of a rather stable stance (to be in the middle and not take a position) (Schrøder, 2000). However, for other groups, there were negative responses towards the texts, as many of the issues they anticipated to be addressed were not addressed, including the pronouncement on free education (or at least a decrease in fees), decolonisation and even a stance on the Rhodes name change.

From the above responses, it is evident that young people are producing counter-hegemonic readings of messages from all political parties. The reader, whose social situation places them in a directly oppositional relation to the dominant/hegemonic text, understands the preferred reading but does not share the text's code and rejects this reading, bringing to bear an alternative frame of reference, meaning participants do not read the messages of political parties passively. It therefore means they are empowered when reading messages in an objective manner.

Participants were asked, "what sort of meanings did you attribute to these messages? To vote/not vote, why?" The great majority of FGD participants said they simply did not vote; others did not even bother to register to vote.

> I didn't vote, simply because I feel like these messages were based on circumstances. At that time, we had Fees Must Fall, ANC was all about sticking with Mandela and stuff. DA was all about corruption because the ANC is corrupt. So I felt like we need more than just that to vote. (Jerry)

Petronella felt that she could not bother to vote because she believed citizens of South Africa do not have equal rights. Plus, she said many of these political parties even use the race card to score cheap political points. Prince has been a political activist as a student, and he detailed a bit of insider knowledge about why he did not vote in the 2016 LGE. He believes the social media messages are not worth the data required to read them.

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> All of this is theatrics, all of these slogans, these catch-phrases. They do not speak to reality and they do not speak to any proven track record. (Prince)

Brutus even said that no amount of political messages on social media would convince him to vote as long as former President Jacob Zuma was still at the helm of both the party and the state. He said, “In all honesty, I will not vote. The only reason I will not vote for the ANC is because of Zuma, but besides that I still love the ANC. And I believe in it.”

Although he agrees with the above participants, for Gift, his meanings and understanding of elections went beyond the political party messages he came across on Facebook and Twitter. He said,

> I actually did vote, but not because of any of the posters. I voted because I went to one of the politics teachings. I always feel passionate about voting as much as I disagree with what’s happening with the entire system and the parties. In reaction to these posters, I don’t think any of them speak to me. I think the one that speaks to me the most is the EFF one because I am a student. And the one that speaks to me the least is the ANC one. I feel I’m the furthest from the target audience, which does not faze me. (Gift)

Conclusion

This chapter discovered that many Rhodes University students spend a significant amount of time on social media and that many of the participants came across the 2016 local government election political party messages on their Facebook timelines. It has been shown that all participants had a comprehension and understanding of the messages and their intention as hegemonic texts. Participants, apart from being social media fanatics, were drawn to social media and more importantly to follow the political party messages on social media due to personal interest (knowing the people running for positions) or having a genuine interest in politics. It was also revealed that many of the participants actually follow news organisations and the Facebook and Twitter accounts of the political parties to receive first-hand media messages. Participants attached different (polysemic) meanings to the texts due to a number of factors, including class and experience. Participants had taken a critical (di)stance when asked about the effective usage of social media by the councillors to speak directly with Rhodes University students. The data revealed that many of the participants alienated themselves from the media texts because of what

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they believed was the candidate councillor's inability to communicate and engage with students.

Other participants were of the view that the candidates put on a lacklustre performance in the run-up to the elections because they were not around and had their Rhodes University societies (Democratic Alliance Students Organisation and the South African Students Congress) and political formations communicating and responding on their behalf. FGD participants felt negatively towards many of the political party media messages. They felt the messages were random or incidental, and not targeted at them as students. The participants expressed their own personal thoughts concerning the way in which issues covered in these political party messages were done in a shallow way. Furthermore, the participants believed that this was a missed opportunity by political parties using social media to speak directly and honestly to issues facing young people in South Africa. They argued that political parties can speak directly with young people and try to address some of their concerns in their campaign messaging. For example, at Rhodes University, safety on campus, sexual abuse, the high cost of higher education and so on were some of the issues that led to a radical campus which experienced protests from students, but these issues were not prevalent in the campaign messages directed at students. Participants felt that the ANC messages were quite arrogant, big-headed (as though they would win by a landslide majority), biased and disrespectful; and not about the kind of work the ANC has done since 1994. Some Participants also gave the DA media messages a thumbs down. They felt the DA media messages were unrealistic and hypocritical for using Mandela in their campaigning. Participants stated that the EFF media messages were believable, realistic and they spoke to people's lived realities.

One result of the failure by political parties to harness the power of social media to relate directly to the Rhodes University students and connect the issues they face with their political party messaging was that the majority of participants did not cast their vote for the 2016 local government elections. Others did not go to vote because of the internal politics within the ANC. Some of the very few who voted did so as a result of engagement outside of the social media campaigns. What is clear from the research is that young voters should be a key site of engagement through social media for political parties for two reasons. One is that, despite thinking to the contrary, these participants were extremely engaged in political issues and were highly aware of political issues and the political context in which they find themselves. The second is that their social media use is prolific. They spend time on social media, and they engage

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with current affairs and political content. Although they are critical of media messages, they are willing to participate in political discourse and want to be engaged by political parties and political elites. However, this engagement needs to resonate with them and be relevant to their lives.

Notes

1. In mid-December 2017, with relatively little consultation or planning, Zuma announced that in 2018 free higher education would be provided to all new first year students from families that earn less than R350,000 per year (Areff & Spies, 2017).
2. The 2017 statistics of South Africa's internet population show that 15–34 year olds make up 65.77% of internet users. Available at https://mybroadband.co.za/news/internet/251063-what-we-know-about-internet-users-in-south-africa.html.
3. A colonialist mining magnate and politician, Rhodes was a zealous British imperialist who used his significant financial power as head of the De Beers diamond group and his political influence as Prime Minster of the Cape Colony (1890–1896) to pursue an expansion of the British territory by founding Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe and Zambia) and by working towards the realisation of his vision of a Cape to Cairo railway (Oxlund, 2016).
4. The 1976 Soweto uprising was a series of demonstrations and protests led by black school children in Soweto that spread countrywide. The uprising profoundly changed the socio-political landscape in South Africa. Students from numerous schools began to protest in the streets of Soweto in response to the introduction of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction in local schools. It is estimated that 20,000 students took part in the protests. They were met with fierce apartheid police brutality. The number of protesters killed by police is suspected to be 176, but estimates of up to 700 have been made. In remembrance of these events, 16 June is now a public holiday in South Africa, named Youth Day (SAHO, 2017).
5. UCKAR is the University Currently Known as Rhodes, a name students and staff came to use to refer to Rhodes University to indicate a desire to have the institution's name changed (Qambela, 2016).
6. All participant names are pseudonyms provided by the researcher.

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CHAPTER 7

Social Media as a New Source of Empowerment in Algeria

Laeed Zaghlami

Introduction

Although written, audiovisual and electronic media pluralism and diversity are operational in Algeria according to official texts and different information laws, in reality the core principles of news values, press freedom, ethics, objectivity, credibility and independence are still the main Achilles' heel of the present media system. It is largely assumed that media mainstream in Algeria have not been able to meet public's expectations and needs. The results indicate that citizens look and search for news and comments from other sources. Social media appear to be the appropriate and adequate source for what they want to know. The rapid rise of the number of social media and social networks has a correlation with the absence of credible, reliable and independent media. Statistics show that over 20 million users have Facebook accounts, 4 million are on YouTube and 2 million are present on Twitter (Belkadi, 2018). These figures show that citizens are not satisfied with present media contents that do not

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reflect their interests, concerns and worries. Alternatively, social media with its different blogs, platforms and websites have become a new space and tribune for people to express themselves freely. The new media is poised to play more active roles in democratizing the public sphere that is still under state monopoly, control and hegemony.

This chapter describes and analyses how social media are presently gaining more ground, spaces, authority and popularity especially among young people. The new media are offering more spaces and platforms to build up their sites and forums in order to express for the first time their views and opinions on current issues mainly those related to the sphere of politics. As a consequence of media exclusion, marginalization and lack of public confidence and credibility, the trends show that young people use new virtual spaces to participate in political debates, discussions and forums.

With the advent of internet and social media, young people tend to be more interested in social, political and economic topics. The general assumption that young people in Algeria are not interested or unconcerned with politics appears to be totally wrong and misleading. In fact, their defection and lack of interest in politics are due to the absence of adequate means and tools of expression. Monopolistic and hegemonic policies advocated by official authorities and lack of press freedom have led to a high level of mistrust in politicians and politics.

Alternatively, social media are offering a new political arena with the emergence of new political practices, values, norms and political actors. Furthermore, the introduction of the internet and its use in different fields has brought about the appearance of new concepts: e-democracy, e-politics, e-diplomacy, cyber dissidence and online community news and so on. Political leaders and militant activists from different fringes of civil society seize the new opportunities to use different applications, platforms and social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, Instagram. The new tools provide young people with opportunities to create, produce and express their ideas and opinions. In addition, many political parties and social, economic and cultural associations alike have adopted new communication strategies by integrating social media and setting up their own forums, networks, websites and blogs in an attempt to attract young audiences who are heavily active and interactive in the social media sphere to politics.

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Political, Technological and Social Background

Before the adoption of the telecommunication law of 2000 (MPTIC, 2017), the sector was governed by laws based on state monopoly in posts and telecommunications. This monopoly created a series of constraints that led to a cumbersome management of procedures, lack of competition and insufficient self-financing capacity. It also resulted in a significant delay in the dissemination of internet services. These shortcomings have forced the state to undertake legal and institutional reforms by providing the sector with a legislative and regulatory framework (MPTIC, 2017). The law provided a clear separation of exploitation and development regular functions through the creation of commercial agencies and services. Besides, the establishment of Post and Telecommunications Regulatory Authority aims at the liberalization of the postal and telecommunications market. The internet was introduced in Algeria in the late 1980s through universities. The Research Centre for Scientific and Technical Information (CERIST, 2018) had exclusive access to the Web. It was not until 1999 that the management was extended to private operators. With the entry of several suppliers, the network is now present in many regions, major cities, university centres, businesses and other institutions. But the development of these suppliers was interrupted because of the monopolistic policy of the historical public operator Algerie Telecom imposed by the authorities on the management and marketing of ADSL.

Social and Demographic Figures

Information and Communication Technologies are more available in the capital city, Algiers. Also, it is necessary to recall that Algeria has 2385 million kms^2; that it is the largest country in Africa after the split of Sudan. However, its population distribution (44 million) is densely concentrated in the north, and almost 80% of inhabitants live in 20% of the northern part of the territory. The country is composed of a coastal band of up to 60 km ranging from the east to the west for a distance of 1214 km of coastline; afterwards there appears the high hills band, as a prelude to the large Sahara desert. These unique features have implications for internet distribution in the country.

According to data released by Speed Test (2018), Algeria occupies 134th place (out of 135) in the ranking of countries in relation to the

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speed of their fixed internet connection. Speed of the fixed internet connection is not the only one where Algeria ranks at the bottom of the ranking. It has established itself in 121st place (out of 125) of the world ranking of countries in relation to the speed of mobile internet connection. Thus, in 2014, 43.38 million were subscribed to mobile telephony with a huge growth; out of this number, 39.79 million were connected to the global service mobile (GSM) system, which represents 80.35%, and 8.51 million were subscribed to third generation technology (3G), which represents 19.65%.

Despite its wealth, youth and particularly its strategic geographical location, Algeria lags behind in the development of the internet. The most recent data from Internet World Stats, which is based on data retrieved from the International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2018), indicate that Algeria has an internet penetration rate of around 45.2%. Tunisia and Morocco are well ahead of Algeria; they have already crossed the threshold of 50% of the population using the internet. Algeria thus has only 18,580,000 million internet users out of an estimated population of 41,063,753 inhabitants. These data demonstrate the progress that Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) need to make in the country. But if the prospects are promising especially for internet in Algeria, the obstacles that slow down its evolution significantly are still very numerous due to the lack of efficient economic, social and cultural development.

Cosmetic Pluralism Media Policy

Media are intrinsically part of the present political system of Algeria. The adoption of the 1989 constitution marked the end of one-party system and a shift towards a multiparty system, pluralism and diversity in the media and press freedom. The 1996 constitution reconfirmed that shift; however, in practice authoritarian attitudes and monopolistic practices still prevail and the transitional period to political and media pluralism seems to be endlessly long. Furthermore, journalists' self-censorship is still prevailing in their work. 'Soft censorship' or indirect censorship, which is defined as 'an array of official actions intended to influence media output', affects several newspapers through financial constraints and political pressures (Zaghlami, 2010). Highly expected changes that were supposed to bring about more democracy, media pluralism and freedom in the political

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system appear to be superficial and cosmetic rather than politically authentic and sincere in everyday life (El Issam, 2017).

Politicians and decision-makers who in the past claimed to be ardent defenders of socialism and a unique party system are the same political personnel who 'survived' that period and advocate today arrogantly, hypocritically and unfaithfully democracy and media pluralism (Zaghlami, 2010). Still clinging to political power, these decision-makers are ruling the country with a sort of 'authoritarian pluralism approach'. Some would describe it as 'a facade of pluralism', which is neither liberal nor completely unique, but a 'tricky combination of both' (Zaghlami, 2015).

Algerian media landscapes have not changed yet in terms of quality and independence in spite of the existence of media pluralism in official texts and laws. When it comes to assess media quality performance, news values and ethics, the results are quite disappointing and discouraging. Thus, Belkadi (2018) finds out that social media have gained more credibility and popularity by challenging public media influence and impact. The analysis of media shows that the political system is still dubitative and unclear in its strategy. On the one hand, it apparently tends to promote democratic values, but, on the other hand, it shows some reluctance and ambiguity if not overtly opposed to a genuine democracy and press freedom (El Issam, 2017).

The audience perception of state and public media is hostile and negative (El Issam, 2017) and very often subject to severe criticisms for lack of credibility and the respect of basic news values and ethical principles. Private media, still in its debut stage, have somehow shown some positive points and at least have offered another angle of presenting news that reflects citizens' concerns and opinions. As a result, social media appear to be well placed to gain popularity and attract the public. It is likely to be a substitute to public and private conventional media if the latter continues to ignore the interests of the public.

The current media landscape is flourishing with 120 newspapers, 20 electronic dailies, 60 radio channels, 30 television channels (5 are public ownership), but on the ground, the results are not exciting (El Issam, 2017). In spite of this large number, it is in reality 'cosmetic media pluralism', authoritarian and the facade of media pluralism; many of them obey the same source and authority and are subject to political, editorial and financial pressure (Zaghlami, 2018).

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The Emergence of Social Media

The main difference between social networks and traditional media is that they offer two very different models of information flow (Badouard, 2017). In traditional media, journalists play an essential role in the selection of information: as gatekeepers, they decide what should be brought to the attention of the public. On the Web and social networks, everyone can express themselves, and all sources of information are at the same level. What makes information visible is the way it will be relayed by internet users themselves via sharing and recommendation practices. The problem we are experiencing today is that all these sources are not equal in terms of respecting the professional rules in force in the journalistic profession, particularly in terms of cross-referencing and verification of facts, which explains the increased rate of rumours and conspiracy theories on the Web. That said, contrary to popular belief, it is the contents of traditional media that remain the most shared on social networks (Fuchs, 2013).

Social Media and Mobile Internet

There has been a marked increase in internet rate penetration and the growing use of social networks and social media. Thus, internet as communication technology has been used in political campaigns to spread messages and contribute to inform and engage voters. However, the use of digital network technologies to shape public policy is met with incredulity by most politicians, public servants and citizens (Chadwick, 2013). In Algeria, internet raised expectations for citizens hoping to access a number of extended channels of communication and an immense volume of information. Further, there were hopes that it would enhance freedom and interactivity. But, in practice, it has been for so long confined to administrative and bureaucratic tasks, and did not generate any new economy, new kind of politics and new values. Thus, internet is most active and interactive tools notably for young population; young people spend more time online. The computer has become a natural part of their everyday life (Dahlgren, 2007). In contrast, in Algeria, though the situation is improving, still some social, bureaucratic, political and cultural hurdles persist and have become sources of obstruction and delay.

The internet as a tool for communication and knowledge development presents by its virtual reality and its ubiquity another facet. The democra-

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tisation of access to computer equipments and facilities such as, PCs, Laptops and Tablets and increasingly sophisticated smartphones, accelerated in recent years with digital convergence. It now allows more than 2 billion internet users to talk, to consult databases of data and to trade online (Morozov, 2010).

Social Media and Political Communication

During the American elections of 2016, Twitter was crucial for Donald Trump who communicated with his followers and then expanded to the rest of his electorate. He reached out to Americans and the rest of the world with his tweets and used it to discuss his presidential counterparts. Presently he governs with the same tools as he has been using since his inauguration. 'Trump's success story' with Twitter is a source of inspiration and a communication policy for the Google, Apple, Facebook and Amazon group (GAFA). They have found out that social media has become neural; thus, they have deployed their investment in all spheres of personal, social, economic and political life.

In Algeria, politicians and their parties are still reluctant to shift to social media usage as they are not yet ready to embrace new communication tools (Kahlane, 2018). It is time to adapt as quickly as possible to a paradigm shift in the communication field. It is also high time that we moved to another type of communication, which must be more inclusive and usefully intrusive, in a world where everything goes very fast. Nearly 65% of our population is made up of young people under 35, the so-called X generation. More than 80% of them use a smartphone and social networks in a natural and, above all, regular way. In a country with 50% of the population on Facebook, we will soon exceed 20 million users of this social network, nearly 2% worldwide, it is this model of communication, to this population who will now make the difference and certainly not the parlour declarations of political parties (Kahlane, 2018).

Social Media, Politics and Political Empowerment

Social media focus on what people do through platforms rather than on critical issues of ownership, rights and power (Dahlgren, 2009). Social media scholars tend to approach the topic in the same way, asking how people use the sites and with what costs or consequences. In fact, some scholars focus on the platforms' force as actors in socio-technical economy (Wilhelm, 2000). Social media support human needs for social

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interaction, using Web-based technologies to transform broadcast media monologues (one to many) into social media dialogues (many to many). Also, social media tools can fulfil various needs, which may or may not have existed previously. Thus, the use of social media is nowadays associated with Web technology. Further, social media have the capability to reach small or large audiences. They can be user-friendly and are able to generate virtually instantaneous responses (Dahlgren, 2013). Also, it is part of a larger economic disempowerment that thrives on young creative workers' willingness to engage in their exploitation (Shane, 2004). So, at their best, social media would help us build better worlds, but they cannot foster more just societies when their primary goals are growth and profit.

Political arguments and moral lessons on social networks (Belkadi, 2018) take place in Algeria and societal issues are now the subject of virulent debates on social networks; the 'hashtag' has been used hundreds of times, with each 'post' bringing its share of subtle explanations, even if a certain number of internet users also use it to hijack, mock or point to its misogynistic character. Facebook pages called on Algerians to 'be men', with the same use of the imperative, and to push their wives to wear the veil. The campaign became popular and internet users responded by publishing, for example, patriotic parade clichés taken in the 1970s and on which we saw teenagers scroll in skirts, in a pure socialist style.

The hashtag has become a way of responding to a politician, and 'hashtag no fifth term' slogan was a leitmotiv for protesters to express their fierce opposition to the president of Algeria to run for another term. It was actually the start of a large social movement against the political system that is still going on. Social media have become an integral part of Algerian society and platforms of Facebook, Twitter and YouTube have made a considerable impact on contemporary life. They have become a tool and a terrain for conflicts between the state and organized and autonomous actors (Mossberger, Tolbert, & McNeal, 2008).

Social Media as a New Space for Political Expression and Press Freedom

The role and place of social media is becoming a new space of political expression and press freedom. More importantly, as the political public sphere has shifted to the new electronic and virtual arena, 'netizens' are offered different tribunes to express freely their political opinions on different topics. Social media tend to become a new source of political

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empowerment, promotion of democracy, media pluralism and diversity. After many years of exclusion, emerging virtual platforms are providing spaces for debates and discussions.

The advent of social media is perceived as an opportunity to enable ordinary citizens to express their views, opinions and speak out their minds and worries. Conversely, public media, which for so long have been restricting their reports, have prevented citizens from airing their concerns and denying their access. Social media have become in a short period a social, cultural and political phenomenon and their contribution to social and political life is likely to offer more impetus and credit to the functioning of democracy. Further, they are playing an important role in the promotion of a free public debate. They are becoming one of the main sources of information, communication and empowerment.

Several political parties and associations have already started to build up their websites and blogs to serve as a window to promote their activities. Besides, political leaders and prominent personalities have created their own account on Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn and so on; these platforms are serving as a personal space to develop and promote their ideas and opinions and free space for tackling issues that are not necessarily and imperatively dealt with by traditional media for political, social and moral reasons.

Thus, the new space has imposed its new style and way of promoting pluralism and democracy. During the April 2014 presidential elections in Algeria, social media content was prolific and active, and numerous contributions were made to the point that the local press had described it as a potential political area that managed to mobilize and coordinate actions calling to boycott elections and ask for political openness and participation. This example illustrates how social media is perceived as a way and means to impose democracy for the partisans of a unique party system. Some more examples will be developed in the course of this chapter. These are the main thoughts and ideas in my chapter which will be consolidated with practical cases regarding political leaders, civil society activists and militants' use of social media in attempts to democratize the social and virtual public media and political space.

In Algeria, young people quickly adopted these new communication platforms as Belkadi (2018) noticed; in 2017, there were 34.5 million internet subscribers in Algeria against 26.5 million in 2016 (ARPT, 2018), with 31.46 million mobile internet subscribers and 3.16 million fixed internet subscribers. The total number of active Facebook users per month

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is 21 million, of which 90% are on mobile (39% women and 61% men). Active Instagram users per month amount to 3.4 million (38% women and 62% men). YouTube, a medium dedicated to video, has an audience of 6.8 million in Algeria.

Social Media and Society

Findings from a local agency (Webdialna, 2012) confirm overwhelmingly a shift to internet use, services and facilities. The impact of Facebook is significant; Algerian pages were inspired by daily lives of citizens (Belkadi, 2018). Using words of the typically Algerian dialect as what the case of: 'Tekariidj el djazairi' '1.2.3 lived Algeria' 'Intik' 'Rouhi 3awni yemak ya tafla' 'Zawaliya club' and many other pages. The user finds a refuge in these pages. These use humour to forget the harshness of life. Algerians use the site to keep in touch with distant family, something very important in Algerian society, especially since the country is Muslim, and the Islamic religion has always encouraged family union. In addition, Facebook allows access to new knowledge, which makes the world really small. Because of these rather positive points Facebook has been able to gain an important place in the lives of individuals.

Webdialna' Main Findings

Webdialna is an Algerian Web company that conducted a survey on a sample of 2500 individuals in 2012 to assess ICT penetration, infrastructures, services and facilities in Algeria. Facts are given to provide an overview about ICT penetration, facilities and services. At a glance, they illustrate openly an inadequate distribution of ICT throughout the country where the centre of Algeria has half of the services and facilities. 51% of users are located in the centre of the country, in which Algiers has 29.28% of ICT services and facilities, east 23.97%, west 15.68% and south 09.36%.

Facebook as Main Social Media

Facebook is perceived as a social phenomenon, the first and most popular social network. Thus, users account for social networks as follows: Facebook (44%), MySpace (07.79%), Copains d'Avant (07.80%), Viadeo (07.50%), Twitter (02.18%), SkyBlog (04.80%) and LinkedIn (02.10%). But, when it comes to explore the purposes of having a Facebook account,

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the results show that 95% use it for chat, relationships, games and interactions with clients.

Social Media, ICT and Political Parties

Although the trends show that young people are less politically motivated and less involved, they are well aware of political issues (Zaghlami, 2010). They use social media to make comments or to communicate. The virtual world is considered to be an extension of a real social and political life and that identity can be built up both socially and virtually. Thus, social media emerge as the adequate space for real democratic and public debate. Being excluded from conventional media, political leaders have their own Facebook account to freely communicate. Their comments are news sources for other media. Facebook is an easy tool to interact with militants and civil society, and websites aim for political communication and participation. 'Où va l'Algerie?' ('Where does Algeria Go?') is one of the active and popular accounts on Facebook led by some Algerian political opponents that virulently criticize local authorities' policies.

Another example from a study carried out by Aicha Bouzid, a researcher from Algiers School of Politics, examines the use ICTs by political parties. The case study is 'The National Rally for Democracy', one of the prominent political parties in Algeria. The main question asked was how and why National Democratic Rally (NRD) militants use ICT and social media in their personal and political activities. A series of questions were submitted to militants of the party in order to explore, understand and analyse the party 'communication strategy and information to militants and society. The main question made a focus on 'the party' communication strategy and information' towards the militants and overall the society.

In response to the question of the reliability and confidence of news sources, the results indicate that 25% prefer the internet, while 25% choose TV channels. To the question related to the use of ICT, the results indicate that 94.7% responded positively. The results show that 36.85% of respondents have been using ICT for less than 5 years, 36.84% 5 to 10 years and 21.05% over 10 years. Regarding the question, 'Do you use social media and social network and which account do you have?', the answers illustrate that Facebook is leading at 32.69%; followed by Skype, 21.15%; then YouTube, 25.00%; Twitter, 09.61%; Messenger, 05.76%; others, 3.84%; and 01.92%, no reply.

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From these findings, it can be concluded that Facebook, as already mentioned, is a social phenomenon and remains the most popular social media platform. Even for militants of the National Democratic Rally (as political actors) it has a prominent position in their political life. Results of the next question confirm this tendency. On the question, 'which types of news are you using in your Facebook account?', the results are as follows: politics (33.33%), society (27.08%), culture (26.10%) and others (04.16%).

In sum, it can be noticed that politics, society and culture are the main news items that militants search in their Facebook account. Also, when it comes to publicise about different political activities and events of the party, Facebook remains the first platform to use in order to promote its political programmes, publish articles and take decisions, with 57.89% of positive answers; 36.84%, negative; and 05.27%, no reply. On the question of contacts and if there is regular and permanent contact between militants through Facebook, 92.73% respondents say 'yes' and only 02% don't use it. Also, to the question of what can you get as benefits and dividends from using Facebook, the results emphasize rapid, quick and easy contacts with militants and public in general. The results show that respondents prefer 'fast communication choice' with 30.36% and 'for quick spread answer' they agreed with 30.31%.

In sum, the main findings of the survey show that the National Democratic Rally as a prominent political party has initiated a new communication and information strategy by embracing the new opportunities that ICT services and social media are offering. Besides being present on conventional media, the new communication approach and strategy explain a shift in the minds of party decision-makers, from traditional and old ways of communication to new media, in order to enlarge their political presence. Also, the trends show that other political parties, public institutions and civil society associations work gradually towards acceding to new social media and seizing the opportunities.

Social Media and Social Movement of 2019

As already mentioned, there is a big shift in the habits of young audience from watching news on television, to internet and social media. Internet-connected computers, telephones or tablets screens have offered a wide range of information and communication possibilities. So, the features of flexibility, rapidity, immediacy, interactivity and mobility that an internet connection offers have 'downgraded' television. The shift to social media

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is now entrenched and has become part of everyday life, a privileged space for interactivity and mobilization. With regard to the current situation in Algeria, since mid-February 2019, tens of thousands of Algerians have been protesting in the streets against Abdelaziz Bouteflika's candidacy for the fifth consecutive term. The protest movement started from social networks; afterwards, he was seen to be prospering and organizing himself online. The revolt began from football stadiums and arenas like 'Ain Mlila stadium event in the eastern part of Algeria', when supporters brandished a large flag (tifo) that showed photos of Saudi Arabia King at the mercy and authority of US president Donald Trump, followed a rapid reaction from Algerian authorities to punish and blame the Ain Mlila squad.

These first reactions meant that protests had left football stadiums to the streets, relayed through social networks, without there being a major player behind (Sadi & Zaimi, 2019). At the beginning of February 2019, a slogan was circulated to call in particular for a big mobilization for the day of Friday, 22 February. Although it was difficult to trace the origin of this call, what is incredible with this challenge is that it is totally anonymous. This is what we call today 'the call of the people', even though we know very well that there was someone behind. The call to protest has been shared by many Algerian Facebook pages, regardless of their category.

Social Media Engine and Tools for Mobilization

The mobilization was organized mainly via Facebook, because Algerians are not too active on Twitter. Facebookers speak about this, and messages are broadcast via the pages of some influencers. However, the issue of anonymity remains unclear and politicians, journalists and artists relay the slogans of the mobilization, like the rapper Lotfi Double Kanon and political activist Amira Bouraoui. Some pages attract more readers, they tend to have an influence by making online calls for streets protests. It is also worthwhile to mention the role played by YouTubeurs, like Anes Tina and DZjoker, who have not hesitated to attack and depict the Algerian president in their videos.

Algerians have been demonstrating regularly against a new presidential candidacy for Abdelaziz Bouteflika and the challenge was born on social networks in a country which has 44 million inhabitants and 50% have Facebook accounts according to the figures of the 'Digital 2018' report. Thus, Facebook is mainly used in Algeria to lead the slingshot. It includes

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so many pages and one of them called '1, 2, 3 viva Algeria' has more than 800,000 followers. Facebook plays a key role in mobilizing, interacting and connecting between users. During different rallies, Algerian police were overwhelmed by the number of protesters; they tried to prevent people from filming, but there were thousands of them on the streets (Sideris, 2019).

From 'Platforms to Streets and Reality'

Facebook groups, videos on YouTube, calls to protest are available on WhatsApp. The mobilization against the fifth term of President Abdelaziz Bouteflika was organized on social networks. Social networks are also used as a medium to disseminate the images of the various events that the traditional media could not show. While traditional media are struggling to exercise and ensure their function of counter-power, Algerian citizens have decided to organize the revolt on the internet. There were tens of thousands to demonstrate this Friday of 12th of April 2019 in the streets of Algiers, and the dispute seems to be growing day by day on the Net. There is no more media power in Algeria, and citizens are being forced to take to the streets; thus, Facebook appears as the only way to coordinate and organize (Sideris, 2019).

The increase in internet access since the launch of 3G in late 2013 and 4G in 2016 has allowed millions of Algerians to connect to the virtual world and to have accounts, pages and channels on the different social networks Facebook, Twitter, YouTube. On the Web, the mobilization force of social networks is planned. So, the organization of several marches simultaneously across the country by protesters every Friday highlighted the weight and importance of social networks in the mobilization process as well as their role and place in the Algerian political and media landscape. An action launched and coordinated only on the networks led to unprecedented popular mobilization in Algeria's contemporary political history. Simple messages and comments calling for a popular march in all *wilayas* (provinces) of the country launched anonymously on social networks on the evening of February 10 quickly resonated with tens of thousands of Algerian internet users.

The call quickly went around not only Facebook and Twitter, but also YouTube. People known by their influence on the canvas were quick to join the action. Singers, actors, commentators, journalists, politicians and even young unknowns produced videos, texts and poems to convince Algerian netizens to take to the streets each Friday despite many attempts to reduce

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internet speeds during weekends (Thursday night and during the day on Friday). According to the non-governmental organization Net Blocks, the internet has been disrupted in Algeria several times since the beginning of the dispute, with many cuts in particular recorded in the region of Algiers and in surrounding areas. However, these actions did not prevent people from mobilizing on the streets (Dimonteil, 2019). Internet users have found another solution to the partial blocking of Facebook. They quickly migrated to YouTube, which served as an alternative plan. Also live video broadcasting counted, by tens on the world's first social network dedicated to video.

Supremacy of Facebook

Social movement in Algeria is flat, without leaders, intermediate bodies, political parties and unions. So unsurprisingly, it has been organized on Facebook, a bit like the 'yellow vests' in France (Dimonteil, 2019). From the beginning of the protest, calls for demonstrations were broadcast and shared by many Algerian Facebook pages. The most popular page '1.2.3 lived Algeria' has been liked nearly 900,000 times since mid-February. Social networks have also been used as a means of disseminating images of the various events that traditional media have often not been allowed to show. The Facebook page '1.2.3 viva l'Algérie' publishes dozens of videos every day, mostly live, on Facebook. According to the Facebook statistics, about 90% of the 21 million Algerians registered on Facebook connect via mobile devices. Added to this are more than 100 Algerian Facebook pages that exceed 1 million fans. These figures testify to the penetration of this network in the life of Algerians.

Conversely, the traditional press is under strict governmental control, and journalists have great difficulty working, collecting information and maintaining their editorial independence from the authorities (Dimonteil, 2019). The wind of freedom that had swept the country is mainly due to the contribution of social networks which have succeeded to impose in Algeria. YouTube, WhatsApp, Viber, Telegram have contributed to enable a hyper-connected population (Sadi & Zaimi, 2019). Online challenges are organized on YouTube. Videos are viewed millions of times, and have found a real echo in a hyper-connected population. As already mentioned, the Algerian population is ultra-connected. It quickly adapted these new communication tools, especially Facebook, which has a very particular resonance there (Dimonteil, 2019). The availability of network connections and the gradual democratization of smartphone use have increased the popularity of internet communications in recent years in Algeria.

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Conclusion

Social media are becoming an integral part of contemporary society and discourse; they serve as platforms for spreading word, for mobilization and for participation. The youth tend to be more inclined to use Facebook as the primary tool for information and communication. In fact, it is considered as a social phenomenon and even some political figures are using it as a personal and political tribune to promote their policies and programmes.

However, it is too early to reach its maturity and plenitude in Algeria, due to some 'hurdles'; digital illiteracy, mismanagement, lack of genuine freedom of the press and genuine democracy. However, social media has become a new social phenomenon, gradually expanding to more political and media public spaces especially for those excluded from the political arena and media mainstream sphere.

Thus, by being heavily present on social media and also critical to the political system, the public is exerting some pressure on authorities through these networks, asking for more political and democratic changes. The rise of so many 'dissident and seditious web sites' abroad is a source of empowerment for those who are excluded from political debates; they express their views and concerns, and very often they speak out their minds in a provocative style by revealing tiny details about politicians and relatives private lives. Also, political figures from the opposition are using all tools of social media to mediate their strategy and reach their supporters in the absence of a fair and sincere public media space.

Ultimately, authorities will and should ineluctably respond to growing demands for more democracy, justice and freedom of press and opinions. They will be obliged to reconsider social media as an integral part of their future communication and information strategy if they want to keep up connections with growing members of the 'virtual' community, which sooner or later will become real, palpable and active. More importantly, public authorities should waive all sorts of pressures on the audio visual field whether public or private in order to enable it recovering its independence, impartiality and credibility. The real values of public service should in the end prevail.

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CHAPTER 8

Post Digital Dialogue and Activism in the Public Sphere

Dalien René Benecke and Sonja Verwey

Introduction

The notion of public space or sphere has always been regarded as the foundation of democracy since its existence entails constant engagement between those who occupy and engage with or move through this space, including government, public and private stakeholders (Akbar, 2018). While notions of public sphere were initially understood in physical terms where street politics could be enacted and offered multiple and overlapping opportunities for engagement with various ideas and opportunities for debate, these debates were most often removed from the centre (or institutions of power). Instead, these engagements occurred on the periphery or margins that were deemed outside of the control of centres or institutions of power and therefore offered greater accessibility and possibility for participation. The notion of public space was revolutionised by

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the renowned philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas (1991, p. 176), who first introduced the term "public sphere" and defined it as "a virtual or imaginary community which does not necessarily exist in any identifiable space". This conceptualisation of public space as a virtual sphere also introduced the possibility of digital dialogue within a publicly accessible space where participants can engage each other in digital debate and expression of diverse opinions.

From this perspective, public sphere represents a space for the identification and discussion of societal problems that also influence political action (Akbar, 2018). Rutherford (2000, p. 18) suggests that the public sphere generates opinions and attitudes through acts of assembly and dialogue, that also serve to "legitimate authority in any functioning democracy". Habermas (1991) regards rational critical discourse as the cornerstone of the success of the public sphere and argues that the public sphere is best constituted and maintained through dialogue, speech acts, and debate and discussions by voluntary opinion-forming associations.

The public sphere is also a contested space that is often used by those in authority to exert dominance and power through what Habermas (1991) terms "refeudalization" of power whereby sanction is offered to the decisions of leaders by maintaining the illusion of the public sphere (Rutherford, 2000, p. 18). However, in "Rethinking the Public Sphere", Fraser (1990, p. 76) argues that "any conception of the public sphere that requires a sharp separation between (associational) civil society and the state will be unable to imagine the forms of self-management, inter-public coordination, and political accountability that are essential to a democratic and egalitarian society." Therefore the boundary between the public and private sphere must be regarded as constantly evolving, flexible and permeable, and therefore neither fixed nor static. A more critical look at the distinction between public and private sphere suggests that these are not straightforward delineations of pre-existing societal interests and groupings, but rather represent cultural classifications and rhetorical labels. Fraser (p. 292) argues that participatory parity in this space is not fully achievable where systemic inequalities exist, and therefore there should be a recognition that different interests occupy the same social space. However, Fraser (p. 293) suggests "democratic publicity requires positive guarantees of opportunities for minorities to convince others that what in the past was not public in the sense of being a matter of common concern, should now become so." Fraser (1995, p. 292) therefore concludes that relations within a social space where publics are differentially

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empowered such as within highly differentiated societies are more likely to be *contestational* than deliberative in nature. According to Rutherford (2000, p. 18), the success of the public sphere is determined by:

- the level of access (as close to universal as possible)
- degree of autonomy (citizens must be free from coercion)
- rejection of hierarchy (eradication of power differentials to ensure equal participation)
- rule of law (in respect of subordination to the rules of state)
- quality of participation (commitment to the principle of logic)

The development of digital technologies is offering new possibilities for engagement and dialogue. In this regard, Jandrić et al. (2018, p. 893) suggest that we are "no longer in a world where digital technology and media is separate, virtual, 'other' to a 'natural' human and social life". The emergence of new media technologies has had a profound influence on how individuals can interact with democracy and enact their roles as citizenry because they are now active participants in a public conversation, instead of passive recipients of information that has to be engaged with privately (Benkler, 2006). Bennett and Segerberg (2012, p. 743) refer to civic engagement by younger generations in post-industrial democracies as "an expression of personal hopes, lifestyles and grievances". As such Jandrić et al. (2018) argue that the post digital era offers new opportunities for dialogue, that "reclaims the digital sphere as a commons".

Post Digital Dialogue and Activism

It can be argued that technologies of e-citizenship turn cyberspace into a publicly shared locality for the contestation of claims about citizenship in much the same manner as physical spaces offers opportunities for dialogue and debate about street politics. However, the nature of the virtual public sphere offers greater possibilities for both access and the cultivation of a culture of democratic participation than the conventional public sphere (Rheingold, 2008). Fuchs (2014) nevertheless points to the contradictions that result from political economy between critical voice and autonomy on the one side, and resource unpredictability and lack of visibility on the other side. Rheingold (2008) therefore suggests that the possibilities that the virtual public sphere affords for participation is dependent on

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both the availability of digital communication technologies and on the access to these technologies as limited by the kind of constraints the state places on its use. Access and use of digital technology by political leaders further depend on the quality of existing relationships between leaders and supporters. This interplay between virtual and physical spheres is evident in the Alexandra case study where the constraints that exist in terms of access to digital technologies have resulted in digital platforms almost serving a complementary role to face-to-face interactions. Whereas the community leader engages in both the virtual and physical realm, the participation of the community itself is limited to the conventional public sphere due to inequalities of political economy. As a consequence, the culture of democratic participation within this community is constrained, and civic participation and dialogue depends both on the quality of the relationship between the community leader and the community and the community leader's ability to use digital technologies to mobilise the community. In the Alexandra case, activism is regarded as the means used by the community as a response to the inequalities that are experienced, and the agency of the leader is what connects resistance from the margins to actions.

Jandrić (2017) regards digital technologies as "inextricably linked to dialogue" but cautions that human agency should take precedence over the novelty and convenience of automatisation and instant communication that it offers in its post digital form. From this perspective Couldry et al. (2014) regard "digital citizenship" as a heuristic concept for understanding how digital infrastructures are constituted through social relations and practices, and not simply used as a tool for engagement. As such, Bennett and Segerberg (2012, p. 739) suggest that the connective action of "personalised content shared on media platforms changes the core dynamic of the action." Spaces for dialogue, as conceived by Dahlgren (2003) are conducive to civic culture by embedding unobtrusive or routinised practices that promote civic engagement through participation and dialogue. Civic culture according to Dahlgren (2003, p. 154) embodies those features of the "socio-cultural world—dispositions, practices, processes—that constitute preconditions for people's actual participation in the public sphere in civil and political society."

Ganesh and Zoller (2012, p. 67) suggest that the prevalence and centrality of dialogue and activism in communication scholarship and trans-

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formative social change require consideration of these theoretical concepts. They argue that while perspectives and definitions of what constitutes activism vary, contestation is a core characteristic that is consistently associated with all approaches to activist communication, and its key concepts such as advocacy, conflict and transgression are closely associated with various notions of what constitutes activism. The variety of dimensions and variables associated with activism serve to illustrate its complexity. Variables, such as personal motivation, education, the media, economic, political, organisation and cultural contexts (Benecke, 2019), converge to establish a cultural space in which new meaning(s) can be either co-created or recreated (Ciszek, 2015).

Ganesh and Zoller (2012, p. 67) further argue that three positions on dialogue are particularly relevant to exploring the relational links and tensions between activism and dialogue, namely, dialogue as collaboration, dialogue as co-optation and dialogue as agonism. Where theorists treat collaboration and consensus as defining features of dialogue, Ganesh and Zoller (2012, p. 85) distinguish three different views of the relationship between activism and dialogue, namely, dialogue is privileged as either oppositional or contested or dichotomised in terms of internal dialogue and external confrontation. Dialogue as co-optation depicts dialogue as a specialised form of communication in which power is regarded as pervasive and difficult to maintain because of the inherent fragility and the vulnerability of dialogue. This vulnerability of dialogue either stems from positions of power where people serve their own interests and therefore employ dialogue as a legitimising practice, and/or from the pervasiveness of inequity and the inherent problems involved in practices of representation.

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) view agonism as a manifestation of radical democracy that emerges out of difference, conflict, disagreement and polyvocality. Agonistic perspectives "privilege conflict as an element of social change and promotes a pragmatic approach to dialogue that highlights shifting relationships of power, identity, and vulnerability, while simultaneously paying explicit attention to questions of justice and social and material needs" (Ganesh & Zoller, 2012, p. 77). Agonism aids theorising about activism and dialogue because it recognises the potential for dialogue that employs a wider array of methods than collaborative-oriented theories. Ganesh and Zoller (2012, pp. 85–86) therefore argue that it is suitable to shift the scholarly bias away from consensus-based approaches

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and aid activist theorising and dialogue in a number of ways that also include:

1. recognition that it is unrealistic or naïve to understand activist dialogue in terms of the abandonment or suspension of power differences
2. allows examination of the multiple ways in which tensions themselves serve to construct contestation and dialogue
3. uncover the multiple ways in which dialogic openness is enacted in activist practice

The basis of democracy is the ability of all voices to contribute to public debate within communities where members share interests and not necessarily a place or location (LaPoe, Carter Olson, & LaPoe, 2018, p. 208). In order to understand dialogue within current democracies and public spheres, an investigation of agency, power and individual or biopower of an activist within social movements is needed. Minority voices should be allowed to influence decisions taken by media leaders as to who needs to be heard (LaPoe et al., 2018, p. 206). Listening to uncomfortable opinions, acting inclusively with diverse "voices" whilst understanding power relations and personal motivation form part of dialogue in this new public sphere.

Power, Biopower and Agency of Activists

By building on the position adopted by Ganesh and Zoller (2012) with regard to dialogue, the following section will consider activism within a post digital context with reference to notions of power, agency and legitimacy as representation of the psychological factors that influence activists in their decision-making and enactments. Activism and power are interconnected and subject to constant conflict in a bid to secure the necessary level of power to exert influence and bring about change. Power and identity also have a strong inter-connection since they both evolve from ongoing discourse, that adjusts and aligns in response to the context, thereby producing meaning and forging new or different power relations (Hardy & Clegg, 2004, p. 19). Power has been defined by many scholars as the ability that individuals have to motivate others to do what they want them to do (Hardy & Clegg, 2004). According to Holtzhausen (2012, p. 25), power must be taken out of the "external sphere to the internal, individual

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sphere, with knowledge and particularly self-knowledge being able to transform us". Biopower, namely, the internal power of the individual, and based on self-knowledge and moral consciousness, requires self-reflection on how one deals with conflict, resistance and disagreements. In a study conducted amongst selected early career millennial public relations practitioners in South Africa, participants reflected on their biopower and agency by relating it to their representation of other marginalised voices (Benecke, 2019). This type of role enactment challenges hegemonic views of power as something that is vested in senior decision-makers and that denies the power and influence of individuals to represent at all levels of society. Instead it recognises the ability to influence and shape meaning through interaction and recognises that their own social representation of concepts assist with meaning making within various contexts. This requires an openness to listen to other voices (MacNamara, 2016) and an ability to represent the views of other citizens. If they are unable to do so themselves, it requires the willingness to act as intermediaries in order to develop symbolic power, agency and legitimacy.

Agency as a concept references the power and creativity individuals demonstrate (Bardhan, 2011) in any given situation in order to conduct themselves with authority and make meaning from the communicative interaction taking place. Agency is thus understood to be both contextual and reflexive where activists use their own unique understanding of the context—as influenced by their experiences—as a basis to negotiate power in relationships. Listening within agency facilitates an understanding of the various enactments that are associated with agency and that promote an understanding of the structures that perpetuate dominance and is therefore open to resistance from activists (Dutta, 2014, p. 72). Structures of communication, along with agency and culture, are constructs that are recognised within a culture-centred approach. Structure refers to both the communication processes and roles that enable participation and interaction (Dutta, 2014). Structures are created by society, and resources for the communicative processes are assigned to them (Dutta, 2014, p. 71). The manners in which social movements such as Put People First (PPF) and 15M used digitally enabled action networks in their communication are examples of how structures and resources can be used by social movements (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 742). Through digitally networked action (DNA), these movements presented two possibilities for individual participation, either through broader public engagement or through individualised experiences that could be shared quickly to larger networks

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through various social media platforms. Within this approach individual and personal experience was key in facilitating both physical and emotional involvement.

From a critical perspective, public relations activism includes biopower, agency and legitimacy of the individual that is enacting an activist role (Benecke, 2019). Since power, biopower and agency have been discussed in the preceding section, the focus of the following discussion shifts to the concept of legitimacy. Holmström (1996) suggests that the legitimacy of the acting individual (also called agent) depends on his or her knowledge, and their ability to persuade others to support a specific ideology. Legitimacy is achieved through the development of symbolic power that adds value to interactions, and that in turn facilitates the development of various other forms of capital (Edwards, 2012). Knowledge consists of the combination of common sense (the consensual sphere of knowledge) and scientific knowledge (the reified sphere of knowledge) as it is normalised in different contexts through the acceptance of others (Batel & Castro, 2009). These two spheres of knowledge are of equal importance, and both are essential for decision-making (Moscovici, 2000). Both universes are conceived as "dynamic, composed by a plurality of forms of knowledge, mutually influential and presenting dynamic rather than rigid boundaries" (Batel & Castro, 2009, p. 418). Decisions taken from within these different universes are distinct. Strategic action is most often associated with the reified (scientific) universe, and it is characterised by monologue interactions that are premised on expert knowledge that is communicated by a single knowledgeable source. The consensual (common sense) universe is associated with an understanding of the heterogeneity of representation and is premised on the inclusion of persons of equal group status and entails interactions that are aimed at promoting dialogical communication. Research conducted by Batel and Castro (2009, p. 431) confirm that individuals use both reified and consensual knowledge approaches to effect or resist change in a specific context.

Activists are unique and diverse individuals whose actions require specific research methodologies in order to understand their psychological processes and the social contexts that influence their actions (Curtin & McGarty, 2016, p. 236). Wolf (2013) refers to the work of Bourdieu to explain a redefined role for activists in society, namely, one that encourages critical interrogation of existing practices and opinions instead of simply promoting vested financial business interests of others. This role requires a curious mindset, awareness of and a sensitivity for the lived experiences

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of others. A redefined activist role necessitates the establishment of networks (including social media networks), the development of symbolic power and the use of symbolic violence to motivate for social change.

Social Movements and Their Connective Action

Any discussion of post digital dialogue in a political context should include a focus on the participants that are involved in the interactions and include a recognition of their motivations and connective actions that result in meaning making and influence within different structures. Bennett and Segerberg (2012, p. 743) argue that political involvement is an expression of "personal hopes, lifestyles and grievances" and that this kind of involvement is more prevalent in the younger generations of post-industrial democracies. This motivation is also evident in the Alexandra case study where activism is construed by the community leader to be linked to a desire to address inequalities that cannot otherwise be expressed or responded to. However, his own personal motivation for resisting is driven first and foremost by the desire to improve the lives and circumstances of the community of which he forms part. The term "new activism" (Wolf, 2013, p. 77) was coined by Hughes and Demetrious (2006) and refers to the influence that social media and the Internet has on changing activism and activist actions, along with contemporary forms of engagement.

Research concerning how traditional social movements evolve identify three determining factors, namely, the relevance to individual; secondly, interpersonal considerations such as empathy and solidarity; and thirdly, individual traits such as an outward-directed focus (extraversion), a level of agreement with cause, commitment, openness to change and emotional maturity (Omoto, Snyder, & Hackett, 2010, p. 1711). These factors can be applied to the #Feesmustfall protests experienced by Higher Education institutions in South Africa 2015–2017 to better understand the emergence of a social movement for change in its wake. The relevance of these protests is clearly high since students were protesting critical issues such as free education, decolonisation of curricula and the insourcing of contract support staff (Constandius et al., 2018; Luckett & Pontarelli, 2016). Empathy and solidarity within the #Feesmustfall movement was characterised by high emotional involvement of both students and faculty that altered how staff and students engaged each other. In the case of #Feesmustfall protest action, researchers identified "mind and body learning" as part of the process of changing existing university policies and

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practices, thus implying that both psychological and physical aspects are involved in change enactment (Constandius et al., 2018, p. 84). Finally, the personality traits of activists, as well as their commitment levels along with an understanding of how activist participation can be sustained, require further research. One explanation for why the #Feesmustfall context has to date been under-researched may lie in the fleeting nature of student-university relationship, and another is perhaps the level of apathy that South African millennials display for political participation (Azionya, 2015).

Ghobadi and Clegg (2015) discuss a wide variety of both positive and negative effects online activism has on dialogue and collective action. Online activism is used to describe "social activism relying on the Internet" (Ghobadi & Clegg, 2015, p. 54). It is argued that online activism has the potential to cross boundaries and connect marginalised individuals, establish collective identity and equality between individuals and groups and provide anonymity which may result in franker debates that also enable social change. Criticism of online activism alerts to certain negative consequences such as surveillance of social activists by opposing and often dominant forces, a flawed understanding of the need for offline engagements and the unequal access resulting from unavailability of resources (e.g. cost of data and government regulations). Research findings suggest that online activism initially enhances public support during the early stages of resistance and dissent, but this wanes over time until collective action is reduced and limited to inter-passive activism or other forms of "clicktivism". Ghobadi and Clegg (2015, p. 65) determined that online activism during the 2009 Iran election contributed to the emergence of a new social movement that published a wide variety of visual content with a very broad reach that created awareness and international support for activists who tried to protect the identity of protestors out of fear of prosecution. On the other hand, online activism also mobilised opposing forces and allowed "dominant elites" to filter information dissemination on the Internet by blocking access to social networks and entertainment platforms and by prosecuting activists. One of the key findings by Ghobadi and Clegg (2015, p. 67) is that "the balance of interventions determine the outcomes of online activism". Both online and offline actions require specific action by participating individuals (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

The concept of connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 744) links activism and dialogue in the virtual sphere because of the possibilities

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it provides marginalised individuals to utilise technology to connect with other like-minded individuals. It enables differently situated individuals, including marginalised "others", to symbolically present personal experiences online and to share content using their personal communication technologies. It aims to establish a platform for diverse identities to force more inclusive dialogue and the recognition of personal experiences. The logic of connective action moves away from the collective action suggested by online activism because of its premise that participation becomes the self-motivating form of personal expression. Social networking, however, involves co-production and co-distribution that is premised on a different kind of "economic and psychological logic" (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 752). An important aspect that is worthy of further research is the functions the networks that emerge from these self-motivated expressions have and how they influence resistant action and political dissent (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012, p. 760).

Conclusion

Dialogue involving contentious issues like dissent and activism can no longer be ignored, managed as a risk or feared. Digital technology and social media platforms provide individuals and groups with opportunities to communicate their personal experiences and to share their opinions and views within various continually evolving digital networks that may or may not consist of structures that can facilitate protest action. Further research is required on digital network action (DNA) in order to investigate both structurally mediated and self-organising action by political protesters and its sustainability and influence in transforming society (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012).

Digital dialogue has drastically altered our social and political realities as well as our modes of participation within the virtual public spheres. The physical realms of protest and action have been transcended, and it has turned the digital realm into a public space that facilitates resistance from the margins. However, despite the enormous potential it offers for engagement and dialogue, especially in respect of marginalised groups, "it has created a system of highly complex and nuanced social, political, economic, and even environmental interactions which, in order to be fully understood and successfully implemented, require a highly critical evaluation of social media's impact on our political agency" (Chapman, 2016,

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p. 3). While the digital technologies may be a powerful means for mobilising civic engagement, protest and action, its decentralised nature, low level of regulation and the easy access for initiation, social media-based activism leaves its social movements susceptible to misrepresentation, co-option and value corruption. Some suggest that without strong leadership digital activism within the unregulated public space of the digital sphere places the values of any movement at risk of subversion by an external agent(s).

A critical, socio-cultural turn in the public relations research agenda has shifted attention away from a predominately organisational focus to include the individual practitioner, and their symbolic power relationships (Curtin & Gaither, 2005). This has resulted in critical interrogation of issues such as dissent, power and activism in professional role enactment with an emergent, activist stance that actively questions and resists existing power structures and normative practices (Holtzhausen, 2012). This is of particular relevance within a poly-contextual and developing environment such as found in South Africa. Public relations practitioner (PRP) role enactment in this context may not only entail representing the interests of those who are marginalised and excluded from social contexts, but also requires advocating for the legitimacy of their own role in their contexts of practice. It is this agency and power that allows them to co-create a better understanding of diverse views and to negotiate new meanings in their engagement with various stakeholders. Such an activist stance may enable a level of understanding of their relational contexts that are more representative of various (conflicting) interests and are therefore more equitable and fair. As such activist PRPs act as symbolic intermediaries, and this role enactment represents the best hope PR professionals have to do the right thing and to actualise the possibilities of the practice by serving the interests and voices of many.

The nature of this activist role is very clearly articulated in the interview conducted with the leader of the Alex Shutdown movement where the leader's agency and personal biopower has created legitimacy and personal influence. Through the interplay between both conventional and digital participation, his self-motivated expressions have been turned into resistant connected action and political dissent aimed at bringing about social change that addresses inequalities of political economy.

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Views of a Political Protest Leader

The Alex Total Shutdown movement (ATS) started in April 2019 with the residents of Alexandra Township in Gauteng, South Africa, protesting for better service delivery. Although South Africans are very familiar with service delivery protests, with around 280 protests taking place in 2018 (Municipal IQ, 2018), the ATS made headline news for several weeks. Some people claimed that the protests were politically motivated due to the national elections planned for May 2019, highlighting the power struggles between the ANC (national ruling party) and the DA (Gauteng provincial opposition party rulers). Some media reports also claimed that the leaders to the ATS movement, who acted as community liaison staff of the Alexandra Renewal Project (ARP), stood to benefit from the ATS movement and that they were motivated to protest as the mayor plans to dissolve the ARP community development project.

One of the leaders of the ATS movements, Sandile Mavundla, was asked to present his views on personal influence, legitimacy and agency against the background of negative media reports and criminal charges laid against the movement by the mayor of Johannesburg, Councillor Herman Mashaba. Here are some of his responses:

How do you see activism and activists?

"I see activism as dealing with inequalities experienced by communities. They say we are equal but we do not see that! The legal system is not accessible to ordinary citizens. I do not have the money to go against the mayor as I cannot afford an advocate or legal team. Activists, I think are people who have an interest in uplifting the community and not for own interest, someone who is willing to take a bullet for the community".

What is your personal role in developing the community?

"I've been staying in Alex all my life and my heart is in the people. I've been working for the ARP since it started with stakeholder engagements. These include going to the community, doing environmental impact surveys, speaking to the service providers. I use Facebook to communicate. In the end, I personally worked to get clinics fixed and ready for the community. I'm not getting any benefit from it even if consultants are paid millions for environmental impact studies. I want my children to be proud of me when we walk in the street. The community

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must say '…your dad did this for us'. The community know me and what I have, '…I still stay in a one room house, don't have money to repair my car, my kids go to the local, public school and I use the public clinic'. Only those with fancy Twitter know about the things the mayor is saying about me, but the ordinary people of Alex know me and my children".

How do you ensure that a protest does not turn violent or destructive?

"I'm calling for the education of the community, not to destroy the little that we have, it still needs to sustain us for the future. The SA Constitution is very open, '…you can protest as long as you picket peacefully, don't carry any dangerous weapons and it allows you to submit petitions on behalf of the community. We cannot be silenced, then it's not democracy. Leaders need to engage the people and experience the conditions [the people] are living in. Proper planning is needed when developing an area. People cannot be allowed to build illegal structures or flush their waste in the Jukskei river (the river runs through the township). Leaders need to be willing to be criticised and insulted if they want to lead, take what is being said and answer what needs answers".

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CHAPTER 9

#ThisFlag: Social Media and Cyber-Protests in Zimbabwe

Shepherd Mpofu and Admire Mare

Introduction

In March 2016, a Harare-based Pentecostal church Pastor Evan Mawarire started a non-violent flag-centred cyber-protest that trended on social media platforms under the hashtag #ThisFlag. Although Mawarire was not the first clergy to take the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) government head-on, what is unique about the campaign was the strategic use of new media technologies to mobilize geographically dispersed Zimbabweans as well as to initiate online and offline conversations between politicians and citizens. The cyber-protests brought to the fore the role of the church (an actor often seen as disengaged and disinterested) in Zimbabwean politics. #ThisFlag

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campaign which trended online for more than 25 days involved the strategic posting and sharing of videos on social media platforms foregrounding, among other things, the fact that the ZANU-PF government had failed the people and asking them to shape up or ship out. Based on a critical discourse analysis of the motivational, diagnostic and prognostic frames circulated on the #ThisFlag's Facebook and Twitter pages, this chapter highlights how the campaign attempted to question the insensitivity of the Zimbabwean government in the face of joblessness, economic stagnation and unbridled corrupt tendencies. The study also provides compelling evidence about the increasing role of the church in questioning authoritarianism and lack of listening amongst the Zimbabwean politicians.

This study also demonstrates how Zimbabweans rejected and appropriated certain national identity icons and reclaiming others as a way of challenging ZANU-PF's contested stranglehold on power. In a context where the ruling elite have deployed patriotic history and other related nationalistic paraphernalia, the creative use of the national flag by #ThisFlag protestors suggests that ordinary people have the agency to mount an oppositional and revisionist historiography. The chapter also argues that digital media technologies have made it possible for cyber-communities to sprout and gain traction as ordinary citizens in the diaspora and mainland reclaim their country. It also interrogates the ambivalent roles of the clergy in postcolonial Zimbabwe given the cooptation and demonization tendencies of ZANU-PF towards those who critique its ruling style. Although the campaign failed to tap into the offline enthusiasm of the critical mass largely due to the skewed political economy of digital media accessibility and affordability, #ThisFlag managed to rattle ZANU-PF which responded with #OurFlag (as part of the *One Million Man March* which took place on 25 May 2016). The chapter also shows that far from being a slacktivist campaign as most cyber-pessimist scholars argue, #ThisFlag facilitated "dissident" conversations between the political elite and the citizens led by the clergy. Beyond using Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and Twitter as tools of political activism, #ThisFlag encouraged Zimbabweans to take up their flags wherever they went as a sign to show the ruling elite that "enough was enough", thereby highlighting the utility of digital media technologies as venues and amplifiers of political activism in contexts where the public space is restricted by legal and extra-legal measures.

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Literature suggests that social media platforms are used as a means to organize civic activism by building, reinforcing and coordinating emerging social campaigns (Couldry, 2015; Gerbaudo, 2012; Lim & Goggin, 2014). As Tufekci (2015) observes, social movements have integrated digital connectivity into their toolkits, especially for organizing, gaining publicity and effectively communicating. Most of the studies conducted during and after the Arab Spring, Occupy Wall Street movement in America, *Occupy Nigeria* and Spanish *indignados* demonstrate that activists and social movements (SMs) are increasingly making use of social media to mobilize support, coordinate demonstrations and circulate protest action frames. Using the *Justicia Rodrigo Rosenberg* and *Movimiento Cívico Nacional* Facebook pages in Guatemala, Harlow (2012) argues that the SM transitioned from operating online towards offline spaces thereby helping to catalyse political change. Facebook pages like the "Spanish Real Democracy Now" (DRY) and "We Are All Khaled Said" (WAAKS) have also received widespread scholarly attention for their roles in the *indignados* movement and Arab Spring (Gerbaudo, 2012; Lim & Goggin, 2014). In authoritarian regimes, Facebook pages and groups have been found to allow activists and SMs to bypass offline public spaces, which are generally repressed and fear-infested. These social media platforms have also been seen to expand the discursive and public spheres in liberal democracies. Facebook pages have become a primary conduit for emotional protest, which can be subsequently taken to the streets.

Studies (Gerbaudo, 2012; Mare, 2013: 14) focusing on the deployment of social media platforms by activists and SMs have also sprouted in Africa. In Egypt, research has demonstrated that the "We are all Khaled Said" Facebook page, which was created in June 2010 to protest against the police-inflected death of Said, played an instrumental role in the instigation of the Egyptian uprising. In Tunisia, Facebook pages played an invaluable role in organizing and galvanizing country-wide protests (Honwana, 2013). Most of the research in Africa suggests that digital media technologies provide the means to bypass traditional news gatekeepers, thereby enabling SM participants to publish their own information and publicize activities, which are often overlooked by the mainstream media. The internet and—especially in African countries—mobile phones have made it possible for activists to circumvent mainstream media to bring their issues to the attention of a broader public and mobilize their supporters.

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Contextualizing the Study

In the beginning of the Government of National Unity (GNU) between ZANU-PF and factions of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) in 2009–2013 marked an interruption to ZANU-PF's dominance in domestic and governmental politics. This also brought to recession economic challenges that ZANU-PFs had delivered the country to since the heightened challenges to its legitimacy starting in the early 2000s. The end of the GNU marked the picking up of the baton again for ZANU-PF after it is alleged to have rigged the elections that marked the end of the truce. The election outcome and ZANU-PF's free reign meant that Zimbabwe was taken back to economic mismanagement and political chaos characterized by violence, human rights violations and high levels of corruption.

At independence, Zimbabwe is claimed to have been in the top four most industrialized countries in the sub-region, with a prolific human capital base and diversified economy that made it potentially one of the few postcolonial countries with the brightest of futures (Sachikonye, 2002). The post-2000 Zimbabwe has been labelled a period of crises as it has seen the country moving from one crises to another depending on the lenses used. But on the whole, Zimbabwe is experiencing a crisis brought about by the ZANU-PF's disputed legitimacy and increasingly authoritarian ruling style it has introduced into Zimbabwean politics. At the core of all this are man-made problems with the situation being made more desperate by natural disasters and such things as climate change. The post-2000 crisis has been characterized by violent elections and land reform programme, election rigging by ZANU-PF and the meltdown of the economy leading to the discarding of the national Zimbabwean currency in preference of the US dollar. In fact, corruption within his government has also contributed to the country's current problems.

In postcolonial Zimbabwe, the church has also participated both passively and actively in formal politics through endorsing or critiquing the current regime. ZANU-PF, for instance, views the church as a tap of voters which can be switched on and off as and when the situation permits. Like other civic organizations, the church has also manifested signs of political resignation and withdrawal from mainstream politics. In other words, it has abdicated on its role as the "voice of the voiceless", "voice of reason" and "conscience of society". With the exception of the Roman Catholic's Catholic Commission for Justice Peace (CCJP) and the

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Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC), the broad spectrum of churches exhibited another worldly detachment from all things social and political.[1] These umbrella organizations (the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference [ZCBC], Zimbabwe Council of Churches [ZCC] and the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe [EFZ]) have been at the forefront calling for a national dialogue to deal with the multi-faceted socio-economic and political crisis. In 2006, these umbrella organizations released a discussion document code-named: *The Zimbabwe We Want*, which invited all Zimbabweans and all friends of Zimbabwe to dialogue to define a national vision of the country they want, and agree on strategies to get there. Issues like democracy, human rights and development have been viewed by the church as out of its jurisdiction. The church became an officious bystander caught in between the anguish of its constituents and the spiritual interpretation of its mandate.[2] Divisions within the church has hindered it from providing a more coherent and unified voice of leadership to the nation. This division has been further exploited by some political leaders using the church for their selfish purposes.

In the early 2000s, the church and a few clergy such as Archbishop Pius Ncube and Pastor Mugadza openly criticized the government for haphazard economic policies, chaotic land reform and ill-informed Operation Restore Order (Murambatsvina). Archbishop Ncube denounced former President Mugabe who was removed after a military coup in November 2017 as a murderer, mobilized the country's Catholic bishops to issue a pastoral letter likening the struggle against the present regime to the liberation war against white rule. He was later scandalized by the state when he was filmed having sex with a married woman from his church.

In December 2015, Pastor Patrick Mugadza from Remnant Pentecostal church in Kariba staged a one-man protest against the ZANU-PF leadership during the party's annual national congress in Victoria Falls. He silently held up a poster on which he had written: "Mr President, the people are suffering". He was arrested and charged with criminal nuisance. He spent two weeks in jail because he could not afford to raise the $500 bail fee. He was eventually freed after 16 days following concerted efforts by the Zimbabwe Lawyers for Human Rights (ZLHR). The pastor's action was driven by corruption, injustice and later the poor living conditions in prison cells. These foregoing examples suggest that Pastor Evan Mawarire was not the first cleric to take on the ZANU-PF regime. However, Mawarire's creative protest tactics and strategies, which borrowed heavily from the Arab Spring and non-violent civil resistance

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(from greats such as Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King), has attracted international coverage.

Digital Media Technologies and Political Activism: The Convoluted Debate?

Literature on the relationship between new media technologies and political mobilization can be structured into two camps: techno-optimists and techno-pessimists (Fuchs, 2014; Wasserman, 2017). On the one hand, techno-optimists believe that technologies have transformative power, producing a variety of beneficial socio-political outcomes in terms of activism. As Couldry (2015) observes, there is overwhelming belief that new media can facilitate faster political mobilization, shorter cycles of protest action and encourage new forms of collectivity. On the other hand, techno-pessimists focus on the "dark side" of new media technologies such as enabling slacktivism, mass surveillance of activists and fragmentation of groups of people (balkanization) and formation of weak ties (Gladwell, 2010: 45; Morozov, 2011). Because of the negative unintended consequences of new media technologies, techno-pessimists argue that these tools are not sufficient to bring social and political change.

Cyber-optimists (Diamond, 2010; Shirky, 2008) have branded new media as a "liberation technology" and "technology of freedom", which assist activist groupings in their quest to reinvigorate democratic processes. Liberation technology is defined as "any form of information and communication technology (ICT) that can expand political, social, and economic freedom" (Diamond, 2010: 51). He describes social media as "liberation technology" that "enables citizens to report news, expose wrongdoing, express opinions, mobilise protest and monitor elections" (Diamond, 2010: 70). Because of this belief in "liberation technology", social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter are viewed as endowed with unlimited powers which eventually empower people to liberate themselves from state repression (Shirky, 2008). Shirky further argues that the internet can lower the barriers to collective action by facilitating leaderless coordination. Cyber-optimists laud Facebook pages for "levelling the playing field" by empowering otherwise powerless actors as well as acting as a crucial tool of political activism (Lim, 2012). For instance, Castells argues that the "networked movements of our time are largely based on the internet". Social media are also touted as spawning new repertoires of collective action like "digital repertoires of action" (Earl & Kimport,

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2011) or “connective action” (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012) at the local, national and transnational level.

Cyber-pessimists (Gladwell, 2010; Morozov, 2011, 2014) argue that new media are not “magic bullets” for creating alternative counter-publics, fomenting political mobilization and facilitating political change. They foreground the structural limitations and unintended consequences of relying on new media for political mobilization. Social media activism is lambasted for being based on weak ties and therefore demanding low-risk participation. Gladwell (2010) posits that Facebook does not contribute to collective identities built on strong ties necessary for high-risk activism. He adds that Facebook activism only makes it “easier for activists to express themselves, and harder for that expression to have any impact” (Gladwell, 2010: 47). For Gladwell (2010: 49), social media “are not a natural enemy of the status quo” and “are well suited to making the existing social order more efficient”. Morozov criticizes cyber-optimists for promoting the gospel of “technological solutionism”[3] where technical fixes are seen as an answer to democratic challenges. As Morozov observes, technological solutionism “impoverish and infantilise our public debate”. He contends that social media activism is a very shallow and an ineffective form of activism, which he termed “slacktivism”. Slacktivism refers to a feel-good online activism that has zero political or social impact (Morozov, 2011). For cyber-pessimists, “slacktivism” results in the replacement of effective real-world activism with ineffective online activism (Christensen, 2011).

Writing from an African context, Wasserman (2017) observes that digital technologies *amplify* existing political forces and facilitate or amplify them rather than *determine* an outcome. Social media are also deeply embedded in power relations and social dynamics which may differ considerably not only between different political contexts on the continent, but also between different political actors, social movements and media users (Wasserman, 2017). Instead of seeing digital media technologies as being *inserted into* African societies with the potential of determining social and political outcomes, they should rather be seen as being embedded in those societies (Wasserman, 2017). This *embeddedness* of digital media technologies in political and social histories means that these platforms are appropriated, adopted and adapted within cultural contexts where other forms of political expression pre-exist (Wasserman, 2017).

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There are those in the middle of the spectrum who argue that technologies empower and disempower as well. This demonstrates the double-sided nature of technologies. While acknowledging that social media fuels political mobilization, Morozov (2011) warns that the same platforms are being used by authoritarian regimes to track, suppress and silence dissidents. Non-democratic regimes have increasingly moved beyond merely suppressing online discourse and are shifting towards proactively subverting and co-opting new media for their own purposes. As Christensen (2011: 155) observes, digital technologies can also be used by the opponents of social change, by employing them for surveillance, disinformation and repression. Corporate and state social media surveillance as well as invasive policing practices are seen as spawning a "surveillance society", in which ordinary citizens and activists are criminalized for their online activities. Cases abound where authoritarian regimes (like Iran, China, Bahrain, Egypt and Syria) have used social media to entrap activists and to conduct mass surveillance of citizens through accessing servers directly and imposing intermediary liability on internet service providers (ISPs).

Conceptual and Methodological Approaches

In order to analyse the findings, this study is guided by the social movement framing theory. This theory is concerned with the strategic aspects of symbolic meaning work which constitutes a central part of communicative strategies used by SM actors to construct collective and individualized self-representation. As Williams adds, framing theory focuses on the "symbolic" dimensions in the action of social movements, as frames "articulate grievances, generate consensus on the importance and forms of collective action to be pursued, and present rationales for their actions and proposed solutions to adherents, bystanders, and antagonists". It puts emphasis on the intentional ways in which movement activists (like Pastor Evan Mawarire) sought to construct their self-presentations so as to draw support from others' points to critical processes in SMs. As such, Mawarire can be viewed as signifying agent actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists and bystanders or observers. Collective action frames are also "intended to mobilise potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support and to demobilise antagonists".

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By acknowledging the link between SMs' frames and mobilization, framing analysis provides a basis for bridging the gap between the ideational and symbolic dimensions of collective action and direct forms of mobilization. Framing theory also provides a suitable framework in order to understand how Mawarire and #ThisFlag citizen movement managed to frame "some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change".

Framing theory provides a way to link ideas and social construction of ideas with organizational and political process factors. Similar to a picture frame, SM actors [Mawarire and administrator(s) of #ThisFlag Facebook page and Twitter handles] exclude other things while focusing attention on others. As Benford and Snow posit, SM framing theory attempts to understand the way in which SMs and SM actors create and use meaning, or how events and ideas are framed. For Benford and Snow, "collective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization (SMO)". Therefore, SM actors [Mawarire and administrator(s) of #ThisFlag Facebook page and Twitter handles] deploy collective action frames in order to create a set of meanings which would inspire people to act collectively towards some goal.

SM framing theory foregrounds four broad areas: the creation and use of collective action frames, framing processes, opportunities and constraints and the effect of framing on movement outcomes and other processes. With regard to collective action frames, Benford and Snow argue that they have three main framing tasks: "diagnostic framing", "prognostic framing" and "motivational framing". Diagnostic framing deals primarily with "problem identification and attributions", wherein "injustice frames" (i.e. identifying victims and amplifying victimhood) constitute the main part of the framing process. It also pinpoints the "sources of causality, blame and culpable agents". Prognostic framing involves the "articulation of a proposed solution to the problem or at least a plan of attack and the strategies for carrying out the plan". Motivational framing provides a "call to arms" or "rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action, including the construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive". By pursuing these core framing tasks, movement actors attend to the interrelated problems of "consensus mobilization" and "action mobilization" (Klandermans, 1984). Overall, the study investigates how Mawarire

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framed the Zimbabwean problem and managed to rally people from "consensus to action mobilization" (Klandermans, 1984) (moving people from the balcony to the barricades) based on his social media campaign.

In terms of methodological approach, this study draws heavily on virtual ethnography which is a variant of the qualitative research design. Virtual ethnography refers to ethnography conducted on the internet, a qualitative, interpretive research methodology that adapts the traditional, in-person ethnographic research techniques of anthropology to the study of online cultures and communities formed through computer-mediated communications (Kozinets, 2010). This data collection tool allowed us to "immerse ourselves in it [Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp] and conducting our ethnography using it, as well as talking with people about it, watching them use it and seeing it manifest in other social settings" Hine (2005: 260). As such, we became part of the setting, observing and listening which provided the framework for the interpretation of their digital activism. We monitored Pastor Evan Mawarire's Twitter and Facebook handles as well as the hashtag #ThisFlag on Twitter in order to gain insight into the experiences and activist practices of #ThisFlag citizen movement. Similar to Horst and Miller, we also engaged in the textual analysis of content gathered on Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp. Over 200 pieces of content, that included Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp posts, were gathered throughout the fieldwork process which began on 20 April 2016 and ended when Mawarire left the country for the United States in August 2016.

Discussion and Analysis of Findings

The following section outlines the #ThisFlag Citizen Movement's origins and political objectives. This analysis and discussion of findings is structured as follows. First, we start with the lost meanings of the Zimbabwean flag, which catapulted Mawarire's rant into an internet sensation and protest movement later on. Second, we look at the failure of leadership and economic mismanagement before we venture into the last theme concerned with corruption and violence as some issues diagnosed by Mawarire as the problematic areas of society. All these themes emerge from the data gathered through online ethnography from Mawarire's wall on Facebook and Twitter feed. Benford and Snow's framing tasks: "diagnostic framing", "prognostic framing" and "motivational framing" are used to analyse issues raised under these themes.

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#ThisFlag Movement

The campaign was launched on 19 April 2016 by a 39 year-old Mawarire when he burst out in frustration and took to social media about his inability to pay school fees for his children. The act of ventilating anger at the state of corruption, lack of accountability, unfulfilled promises and arrested development gave birth to #ThisFlag Citizen's Movement for Zimbabwe. The hashtag #ThisFlag was born and internet-literate Zimbabweans within and outside the country began to air their frustrations. The movement continued to mobilize online and offline for non-violent demonstration against the ruling elite culminating in the #ZimShutDown2016 which was coordinated in collaboration with #Tajamuka youth movement and other unions. In many ways, the campaign shares similarities with Martin Luther King's non-violent direct action which gave birth to the civil rights movement in the United States. Following the viral spread of his short social media videos and radio interview with Ruvheneko Parirenyatwa on *ZiFM*'s *The Platform Programme*, Mawarire's impassioned cry lit the fire in most Zimbabweans to re-own their flag, to stop wishing they lived in another country and to force the politicians to answer questions on their lack of accountability and corrupt ways without fear. Key to the success of #ThisFlag movement was its ability to define the contours of the "collective action problems"[4] in the country. Zimbabweans at home and abroad began posting videos of themselves draped in the national flag and calling for government reforms to address numerous issues facing the country.

The catchphrases for #ThisFlag Citizen Movement include #HATICHADI #ASISAFUNI #HATICHATYI #ASISESABI—meaning in ChiShona and isiNdebele "we've had enough, we are not afraid". The movement claims that it was funded by Zimbabweans from all walks of life and other well-wishers. Six values are said to be at the core of the movement: integrity, dignity, boldness, non-violence, citizenship and diversity. #ThisFlag stands in support of all those in prison for standing up and speaking out and those citizens being subjected to intimidation and harassment. During its formative stages online, the movement was dismissed by pro-government spin doctors as no more than a social media campaign. Jonathan Moyo (ZANU-PF secretary for information, communication and technology) dismissed the movement as nothing more than a "pastor's fart in the corridors of power".

However, McGrath (2016) argues that the citizen-led movement was neither restricted to social media nor was it calling for a revolution. Instead

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it was aimed at mobilizing citizens to hold the government accountable for poverty, corruption and injustice that plague Zimbabwe. Moyo tried a counter-narrative with his own hashtag #OurFlag as well as labelling Mawarire a regime change activist sponsored by the United States and European Union. #ThisFlag hashtag was also criticized for being an elitist diaspora-inspired movement that was taking "to the Twitter", which would have no traction with the thousands of rural folk who have consistently voted former President Mugabe back into power. Despite all the critiques, the popularity of Pastor Evan Mawarire and #ThisFlag soared on social media platforms and offline spaces. His movement became a rallying cry for opponents of former President Mugabe. Like GetUp in Australia, #ThisFlag metamorphosed from a predominantly "born digital" movement into a hybrid citizen movement. #ThisFlag citizen movement can be conceptualized as a hybrid entity because of its deployment of both offline, on the ground fieldwork with digital tactics.

Although it began online, #ThisFlag has long since moved beyond the confines of the internet. The movement organized a public debate with the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe Governor to air citizen discontent about the introduction of bond notes—Zimbabwe's own version of the US dollar. This was a rare meeting between citizens and public officials, as officials are loath to place themselves in the firing line of disgruntled citizens. They even tried to challenge the constitutionality of the introduction of bond notes through laughing strategic litigation cases. The movement also organized peaceful nationwide stay away protest on 6 July, resulting in eerily empty streets and unprecedented one-day closure of schools and businesses across the country. The state responded by arresting the protest leader but the citizens reacted by thronging around the courtroom in his support. There was effective use of social media for organizing the grassroots activism. The government reacted by blocking the WhatsApp private messaging service, which was widely used during the 6 July protests. At a funeral at the National Heroes Acre on 19 July, Mugabe called for Mawarire to leave the country.

In terms of its prognostic frame, #ThisFlag was very subtle about calling for the violent removal of then President Mugabe. Instead, it urged citizens to demand accountability from elected officials and appointed public officials. It was actually #Tajamuka (we have rebelled) citizen movement which repeatedly called for Mugabe's removal. #ThisFlag steered away from the mantra of "Mugabe Must Go" choosing rather to focus on forcing the ruling party to reform. As McGrath (2016) posits, it was polit-

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ically astute and eminently realistic to avoid calling for the president's removal. By focusing on bread and butter issues, #ThisFlag and Pastor Mawarire made it difficult for government spin doctors to twist the movement's central message. The movement focused on breaking people's fear of speaking out, creating an active citizenry ready to hold its government to account. It also urged citizens to register to vote ahead of the 2018 polls. In a way, Mawarire managed to tap into the reservoir of non-violent civil resistance popularized by Martin Luther King, Dalai Lama, Mahatma Gandhi and others. History has shown that it is more difficult for repressive regimes to crack down on non-violent civil resistance. Its non-partisan modus operandi enabled the movement to transcend ethnic, religious, racial and party divisions, mobilizing citizens around bread and butter issues. Although it made significant inroads in urban areas and the diaspora, the movement failed to reach the rural areas where two thirds of the majority live.

This particular section focuses on how Mawarire and #ThisFlag citizen movement deployed social media from the start until he eventually left the country for the United States. In fact, he used his mobile phone to take short videos which he then posted on his Facebook page. His continued posting of Facebook videos led to an outpouring of online and offline support with some of his followers and fans posting their own photos and videos draped with the national flag. Although he initially used WhatsApp as a venue of broadcasting his emotional appeal to all Zimbabweans to demand accountability from their elected and public officials, his fans and followers downloaded his videos on Facebook and Twitter before circulating them further using various social media platforms.

Mawarire also used Twitter to respond to attacks by politicians and the mainstream media controlled by the government. He also used Twitter to respond to politicians like then President Mugabe, Supa Mandiwanzira, Jonathan Moyo, Psychology Maziwisa and other opponents. They used a variety of social media platforms to disarticulate and deconstruct the #OurFlag counter-narrative which was popularized by Jonathan Moyo and Psychology Maziwisa. The microblogging site was utilized for advertising and mobilizing people to participate at planned protest events. After his incarceration, other groups and individuals used the medium to rally people to come in their numbers at the court for his bail hearing. They also mobilized people to stand against trumped up charges against Promise Mkhwananzi and other activists (such as Linda Musariri) from #Tajamuka citizen movement.

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Unlike previous unsuccessful social media campaigns like Baba Jukwa, One Million Man March and Zimbabwe for Prosperity, #ThisFlag managed to integrate both online and offline mobilization tactics. For instance, Mawarire availed himself on a commercial radio programme hosted by Ruvheneko Parirenyatwa on ZiFM Stereo. His appearance on the radio programme enabled him to gain access to the national (although predominantly urban and diasporic) audience. It also allowed fence sitters to take him seriously unlike other online characters like Baba Jukwa who remained anonymous until their disappearance from the virtual space. Following this successful radio programme, Pastor Evan moved from being an ordinary man ranting out his frustration to a spokesperson of a national movement which transcended ethno-political divisions, racial and other social stratification variables. He attracted more press, television and online interviews from various countries which also helped to circulate and distribute his collective action frames. Besides these media engagements, Pastor Mawarire was invited to speak at church meetings in Zimbabwe and South Africa. These meetings were meant to convince Zimbabweans to play a role in liberating their country from corruption, unemployment, poverty and injustice. He also addressed students at some South African universities.

The movement triggered demonstrations by Zimbabweans in South Africa, the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, Botswana and Kenya. #ThisFlag movement deployed the following repertoires of contention: petitions, debates, street protests, strategic litigation and shutdowns which were instrumental in breaking the barriers of fear and apathy which has dominated the political landscape since the bloody Final Push of 2005.

The #ThisFlag campaign addressed a number of issues leading to offline protest actions taking place in some cities in Zimbabwe like Bulawayo, Harare and also at Zimbabwe embassies outside Zimbabwe. The 'meeting' of online and offline has helped alter social movements' communicative strategies in Zimbabwe. McCandless records that one prominent pressure group, the National Constitutional Assembly "kept itself and the constitutional issue in the news and in the national psyche …through regular protests, mass actions, and litigation in the courts" (2011: 170). Similarly, #ThisFlag used social media as the medium of choice to mediate the issues of concern accompanied by national protests and international ventilation of the movement and issues. In the posters, the use of different languages illustrates Mawarire's attempt to make #ThisFlag movement and protests racially and ethnically inclusive.

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Failure of Leadership and Economic Mismanagement

The #ThisFlag protests use the diagnostic frame of failed leadership. In one Twitter image, Mawarire is shown with young people studying abroad with the caption "Our love for Zimbabwe is growing stronger daily that's why we will find a new way daily to say enough is enough". The statement "enough is enough" is directed towards the current crop of political leaders, especially ZANU-PF which has been in charge of the country since 1980. As a liberation movement, ZANU-PF has used this liberation mantra to shield itself from critique whereby anyone who criticizes the ruling party is labelled enemy of the state and vilified (Mpofu 2014). There has been a conflation of the state and party whereby ZANU-PF members serving in cabinet easily take state funds to finance political party projects. The current state of the nation and citizenry at large is gloomy leading to Mawarire and other agitating for the resurrection of the Zimbabwe dream many people died for during the war. Mawarire used polls to gauge citizens' attitude towards politics and the current government.

> @ThisFlag 1980 (03.09.16)
> What do you citizens want?
>
> 58% Regime change
> 2% Current government
> 31% Free and fair elections
> 9% Transitional council
> (949 Votes—Final results)

Another picture posted on Facebook by Mawarire shows him in a pensive mood, with the Zimbabwean flag wrapped around his hands. It's either he is arrested by the flag or he's holding onto it tightly and this speaks to the contests that followed the use of the flag as a protest artefact where the government ended up outlawing any public usages, carrying any references to the flag for anything other than official use. Mawarire's picture is accompanied by one of his statements that saying "if we cannot cause the politicians to change, we will have to inspire the citizen to be bold". This is both prognostic and motivational at different levels. At the prognostic level, the poster addresses the 'Lenninisque question of "What is to be done?"' (Snow & Byrd, 2007: 126–127). In other words, prognostic framing articulates the "proposed solution to the problem" and also suggests "a plan of attack and the strategies for carrying out the plan" for a solution. The

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central question relating to issues that need to be addressed were issues of official corruption at ministerial levels, the rejection of bond notes, demand for jobs, clamour for human rights and the like. The overarching project and question is anchored on the need to change the way things are done in terms of policing, governance, job creation and so on. The answer for #ThisFlag movement is that if the politicians fail to change then it is incumbent upon citizens to be "bold". Embedded in the inspiration of being bold could be the suggestion that citizens engage in offline activities in order to pressurize the government into acting. The offline activities that the citizens engaged on were mass stayaways and carrying the flag on their necks wherever they went as a sign of protests. Also, citizens' boldness was displayed at the court appearances of some movement leaders like Mawarire, Promise Mkhwananzi and Linda Masarira—who bore the brunt of the regime the most as she was incarcerated the most. The failure of the politicians "to change" acts as a motivational frame for doing something, that is, acting through protests.

One of Mawarire's main diagnostic frames of the country's problems is that of economic meltdown that has partly contributed to the country's challenges. Summarized in the post of 'Mbuya va-Hector', the messages that were broadcast on different social media platforms, as intimated above, were diagnostic, prognostic and motivational. The images used speaks about a mythic woman, Mbuya va-Hector, chiShona for Hector's grandmother who is 62 years old and finds herself without savings, pension and health care after having survived the liberation war and the brutal Smith colonial regime. In addition, she paid her taxes, is educated and still struggling as the post suggests. ZANU-PF has always argued that its presence and stranglehold on power is for the empowerment of black Zimbabweans and the message on the poster concludes by asking, 'Is she empowered?' More posts of economic mismanagement are composed and shared by Mawarire. ZANU-PF and its members have plundered state resources, making economically senseless decisions and using state coffers to advance ZANU-PF's stranglehold on power and in the process destroyed the Zimbabwean dream of freedom, peace, prosperity and dignity. Mbuya va-Hector's profile is just like that of an unknown soldier at a heroes' acre. The profile is not distinct symbolizing that she stands for the many people who are suffering under the current socio-political and economic situation in Zimbabwe. That 'her' image follows the colours of the national flag is telling. It seems most citizens who are suffering under the ZANU-PF regime have played their part as dutiful citizens who have

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paid their taxes, had their savings and so on and the ruling elite have failed to safeguard these.

Diagnostic framing, according to Benford and Snow, as already intimated, identifies the problem and also attributes it to those responsible. Most of the problems identified by Mawarire and his followers, even though not new and having been in the public debate for a long time, include electoral fraud, police brutality, corruption, failure by some ministers and economic mismanagement by ZANU-PF. For instance, the issue of the bond notes[5] also caused concern among many people who suggested that their adaptation would lead to economic decline. The use of bond notes was meant to avert the cash shortages that were being experienced in the banking system. Unlike other protest movements like Tajamuka, which called for the removal of ZANU-PF, #ThisFlag movement attempted to bring solutions to the table. For instance, the movement met with the Reserve Bank Governor Dr John Mangudya soon after the introduction of the bond notes. The prognosis to the issue of bond notes by #ThisFlag movement followers remains unclear. They argued that it would lead to the return of the Zimbabwe dollar. Bond notes were brought in by the government to alleviate cash shortages but #ThisFlag movement led a resistance campaign against them as they were going to cause more economic problems.

Violence and Corruption

ZANU-PF has "maintained its hegemony through the use of violence, repackaging of nationalist historiography and collective liberation war memory as well as relying on the support and public media discourses" from those intellectuals supportive of it and "anti-colonial redress and an anti-imperialist critique that have found widespread resonance in the region and on the African continent" (Raftopoulos & Phimister, 2004: viii). Violence rather than dialogue has been used as a medium of communication especially when citizens try to express dissatisfaction in the way the government is run. In most colonial settings, violence could be used either by the oppressors to maintain their position or by the oppressed to set themselves free. Carr argues about this thus "violence of the oppressors [which] stimulated national consciousness on the oppressed … where European violence dehumanised, African violence allowed the possibility of becoming fully human by facilitating the creation of the nation". National consciousness formation is a liquid and fragile process which the nationalist imagine could be controlled and maintained via violence. The

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problem stems from that after independence the liberators continued to use violence as a form of social organization instead of dialogue. Besides the use of violence during protests, the government has used abductions to instil fear into the citizens who dissent.

Mawarire, as a prognosis, argues in a Tweet sent out on 21 September 2016, that the highest form of patriotism, contrary to suggestions by ZANU-PF, is to expose the "corrupt people in our nation" rather than being silent or sugar-coating the facts. Mawarire's videos addressed mainly the issues of police brutality and corruption in roadblocks across the country. The solution and call to arms to the rest of the citizens was not to respond to police brutality using violent means.

Besides diagnosing the country's problems as violence, Mawarire also addresses the issue of corruption in government. His messages in videos and posts on Twitter and Facebook expose how the ruling elite and other public servants have corruptly benefitted from state coffers to the detriment of supplying services to the citizenry. Mawarire's prognostic framing of this problem was that the president fires corrupt ministers. However, former president Mugabe is implicated where his son-in-law's appointment as COO of the national airline is seen as 'disgusting corruption' by Mawarire making a mockery of #ThisFlag movement's calls for Mugabe to act against corruption.

Concluding Remarks

Besides making use of subtle religious language, artefacts of engagement and an emotional appeal to the conscience of the suffering masses of Zimbabwe, Pastor Evan Mawarire managed to de-ethnicize activism and politics through making use of universalizing slogans and self-immolating videos. The campaign also managed to draw on Mohamed Bouazizi's claims about unemployment, lack of social mobility amongst the youth and corruption as mobilizing frames which enabled bystanders to move into the "consensus and action mobilization" (Klandermans, 1984) mode. The campaign also deployed a combination of online and offline mobilization tactics, which allowed citizens from all walks of life to participate in their own unique ways. Those in the diaspora posted images of them draped in the national flag and making very serious demands on the government to run the country in a democratic manner or face civil unrest. The online success of the movement demonstrated that it is very possible for charismatic activists and politicians to announce their grand entry into the political arena via short, punchy and emotionally drawing videos.

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Instead of relying on rallies, posters and mainstream media, charismatic activists are increasingly occupying leisure spaces like social media as sites of protests and mobilization. Despite these novel uses of social media and offline mobilization techniques, #ThisFlag citizen movement failed to use these tools for online fundraising. Fundraising could have assisted it to pay bail fees its members and sympathizers who were arrested during the National Shutdown. It also failed to use social media like other movements in the global North, which share a culture of digital testing and listening. This entails a constant monitoring of an array of data collected from social media engagement rates, member response to calls to action in emails, to profiling volunteers and activists. Despite the popularity of his movement, Mawarire failed to win in a council electoral contest in 2018. This suggests the deceptive nature of social media movements in that they do not necessarily translate to political legitimacy, popularity and trustworthiness in the locales where leaders of movements may come from.

Notes

1. The Zimbabwe We Want Discussion Document 2006.
2. The Zimbabwe We Want Discussion Document (2006) http://archive.kubatana.net/docs/relig/zim_churches_national_zim_vision_060918.pdf.
3. It refers to the treatment of "all complex social situations either as neatly defined problems with definite, computable solutions or as transparent and self-evident processes that can be easily optimized—if only the right algorithms are in place".
4. "Collective action problems" arise when a problem can be solved only through cooperation by many, but when there are strong disincentives for any one individual to participate, especially if victory is not guaranteed.
5. Bond notes were a form of currency, not necessarily legal tender, that were pegged initially as equal to the US dollar that the country had adopted as legal tender. Bond notes were introduced to curb Zimbabwe's liquidity problems which came about economic meltdown due to Zimbabwe's political problems.

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CHAPTER 10

#Zuma Must Fall This February: Homophily on the Echo-Chambers of Political Leaders' Twitter Accounts

Rofhiwa F. Mukhudwana

Introduction

Utopian rhetoric about the utility of social media in politics and governance still captures a plethora of research about the topic in Africa. Much of the scholarship about social media in Africa is still caught up in the portrayal of possible advantages of the medium and its uses in politics and democracy. This is understandable in that Africa sits in a unique position in the geopolitics of digital coloniality. Issues of access and all its variables, digital divide, adoption and uses are still relevant topics that demand further exploration. However, it cannot be denied that this is retarding the discussion in its trajectory to evaluating the nuances of the technology and its applications to politics. Contemporary literature on social media is concerned with not only documenting the positive ramifications of social media on the electoral system, but is equally concerned with the potential

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challenges social media impose towards the electoral democracy. This chapter joins this discussion by exploring the complexities caused by homophily, political polarisation and populism caused by the power to create one's own echo-chamber of like-mindedness in social media and the tendency for politicians to do so. This critically dispels the technological determinism idea that social media are inherently democratic in nature, not malleable to manipulation and that politicking is dead.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the notion of echo-chambers in the Twitter sphere and to review the resultant implication to influencing public opinions and create political polarisation on contentious issues. Primarily, I argue that Twitter accounts belonging to political leaders of various political parties resemble the principle of echo-chambers in theory. However, in practice, is this so? How diverse are opinions therein and how open are they to alternative accounts? And to what extent do political leaders as opinion shapers triumph in manufacturing particular consent in divisive political matters that ends up being a polarised issue? The case study in point is the #ZumaMustFall campaign. I provide a brief background to the campaign and outline the methodology in the evaluation of the case study.

Background and Method

The actual #ZumaMustFall has about six hashtags with the same name. It can be argued that this #Hashtag was inspired by other South African Fallist Movements such as the RhodesMustFall, FeesMustFall and DataMustFall, for example. This hashtag on Twitter gradually coalesced into a movement (with a website) that campaigned for then president Jacob Zuma to resign from the presidency. Claiming to represent the interests of voters, the movement denied having a political affiliation or radical tendencies (Ranjeni Munusamy, 2016). The objective of the campaign #ZumaMustFall was to build a momentum to turn public sentiment against Zuma in the hope of affection the public agenda which would pressure Zuma to resign. The term (#)ZumaMustFall was popularised by the media to refer to collaborative dissents and mobilisation around the idea of him resigning or being recalled. The term 'recall' became popular in 2008 when the ANC National Executive Committee (NEC) coerced then President Thabo Mbeki to resign. In that way, a precedent was set against the ANC having two bases of power, the Mahlamba Ndlopfu House (official residency of the presidency) and Luthuli House (official

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base of the ANC). For that reason, the campaign grew in rigour following the resolution of the 54th ANC National Elective Conference to elect Deputy President Cyril Ramaphosa as the president of the African National Congress (ANC). The media, the public, oppositional parties and the ANC itself assumed that Jacob Zuma would resign to consolidate power on the newly elected president of the ANC or would be recalled.

The #ZumaMustFall campaign was intensified by oppositional parties and the ruling party itself on February 2018. Former President Jacob Zuma finally fell that February following a two-week long anticipation of a change in the political leadership of the country which played out like a political drama full of twists and turns, promises and postponements. Mmusi Maimane, @MmusiMaimane, summarises it quote succinctly, "whilst we have not had a state of the nation, the nation has been in a state, not just in last 9 days but last 9 years". The dramatic quandary regarding if and when Zuma would resign created a malleable political and information vacuum open to persuasion, propaganda and misinformation. This case study provides a good example of the influential power of social media during urgent political crises that are divisive in nature.

Political leaders used their social media spaces to manufacture consent about their positionality on the #ZumaMustFall campaign. The four political parties' leaders selected for analyses are Economic Freedom Fighters' (EFF) Julius Malema, Democratic Alliance's (DA) Mmusi Maimane, United Democratic Movement's (UDM) Bantu Holomisa and African National Congress' (ANC) Cyril Ramaphosa. Unfortunately, during the time of the campaign, then President Zuma did not have a Twitter account. He has recently joined Twitter (on November 2018) as @PresJGZuma, with 237,000 followers (in March 2019). It would have been interesting to explore his own positionality about a campaign dedicated to his removal from office. Although it was 'unanimous' that Zuma Must Fall in February 2018, there were still deep nuances and variations in the debates. The study presents a qualitative content analysis of all tweets posted by the political leaders (including retweets and responses) on their timeline in February 2018. Although Zuma fell on February 14, (oppositional) politicians attempted to set and frame the agenda regarding what additional political reform should complement the presidential reform (e.g. reshuffling of cabinet, etc.). For that reason, the whole month of February is considered. The research question guiding this study is: To what extent do the Twitter accounts of selected political leaders in South Africa indicate an existence of *echo-chambers*, *homophily* and *populism* during a political

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crisis as #ZumaMustFall and what is the relationship between these three concepts?

Because of a lack of consensus on the definition of echo-chambers, there are contending variables which are used to judge their existence. For instance, Garimella, Gionis, Morales, and Mathiudakis (2018) evaluated two avenues of echo-chambers: (1) content—opinion that is shared by users—and (2) the network, the social network structure around the user. To the contrary, I only focus on the content—that is, the Twitter feeds of political leaders. Thus the existence of an echo-chamber will be measured by the degree of homophily on the Twitter feed. The following measures of homophily are devised for the purpose of this study: (1) diversity of opinions—both of what politicians tweet and what the public deposit to the account (2) willingness to accommodate political opposition—the attitude of the political leader to accommodate diversity of opinion, (3) partisanship and (4) political polarisation on the Zuma issue. Additionally, the existence of populism is investigated. The following section reviews extent literature pertaining to echo-chambers, homophily and populism on social media.

Literature Review

Echo-chambers are becoming a critical concern for traditional standards regarding political deliberation online in democratic societies. Garimella et al. (2018) define echo-chambers broadly as situations where users are exposed only to opinions that resonate with them. I define and treat an echo-chamber, on this chapter, as a noun, based on a definition provided by the online Merriam-Webster dictionary. Echo-chambers are defined as "a room with sound-reflecting walls used for producing hallow or echoing sound effects"—often used figuratively. This definition is adopted for the purpose of this study.

Cass Sunstein (2001) is among the first few scholars to evaluate the concept of echo-chambers caused by a selective exposure of political news on the internet, facilitated by search engines, interrelated hypertexts and algorithm. He observed that "we live in the age of algorithms, and algorithms know a lot" (ibid.). He warned that the power of algorithms is likely to improve drastically with each succession of information technology. Algorithms learn a great deal about us, and they will know what we want or would like before we do, and better than we do. They will know the political party we are likely to vote for and the issues that are important

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to us politically. They select and present politics to us that resonate with our ideologies. The postulation, therefore, is that the internet and social media are promoting a fundamentally fragmented and polarised citizenry. Garrett (2009) was one of the few to actually test out the idea. She concluded that it was more the desire for opinion reinforcement than the aversion to opinion challenge that motivated selective exposure. This highlights the power of cognitive dissonance in selecting political news, ideologies and opinions. According to cognitive dissonance theory, people experience positive feelings when presented with information that confirms their decision as correct (Garrett, 2009).

With social media, echo-chambers are more prevalent today. Social media allow people to create their very own political news feeds and essentially live in them and act on their bases. A Twitter's timeline of each user is unique as populated by a personal selection of @followings. People no longer want to see things that do not interest them or politics with little relevance or resonance to them. As people are sorting themselves into communities of like-mindedness, they are essentially living in "a prison of their own design". Moreover, the collegial brevity and lack of alternative thinking will breed "excessive confidence, extremism, contempt for others and sometimes even violence" (Cass Sunstein, 2001).

Homophily refers to the tendency for people to seek ties with those similar to them. It is a concept similar to echo-chambers. For our purpose here, let us call homophily a verb and refer to an echo-chamber as a metaphorical house of like-mindedness, a noun (as per our definition). Because homophily accumulates into a shared worldview, it naturally crystallises shared political attitudes of which the consequence is the cultivation of echo-chambers. Similarly, Banisch and Olbrich (2019) found that selective exposure leads to cognitive dissonance that in turn leads to "opinion clusters" (echo-chambers) in which users become collectively more and more committed. The rise of social networking sites has given a new relevance to the question of political homophily. Echo-chambers on social media networks like Twitter create plurality without diversity of both political content and opinion. Within these Twitter spaces, people are largely listening to louder echoes of their own voices. Thus echo-chambers can lead people to believe in falsehoods and be malleable to political manipulation and fake news. Moreover, solitary exposure of like-minded attitudes and opinions crystallises extremism. Even though people are naturally selective and have been doing so across history, the selectable consciousness to political information creates a serious problem for electoral democracy.

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Colleoni, Rozza, and Arvidsson (2014) investigated the structure of political homophily on Twitter. They found that the selective exposure process is due to a tendency of individuals to reduce their cognitive dissonance and as a consequence, to create homogenous groups, affiliating with individuals that are similar in certain attributes, such as beliefs, education and social status. On the contrary, Barbera, Jost, Nagler, Turcker, and Bonneau (2015) concluded that perceptions of political polarisation may be exaggerated. Using big data, they found that homophilic tendencies and political polarisation are flexible and largely event-based, depending on the nature of the issue at hand. They also found that divergent political information is not always constrained by the wall of the echo-chamber; they sometimes permeate and enter the network, which means that echo-chambers are not as rigid, static and impenetrable as suggested by Cass Sunstein (2001). Therefore, research on homophily on Twitter so far has reached contrasting results.

Research on digital democracy and political communication has focused on the potential of the internet, now social media to reinvigorate the public sphere. Dahlgren (2005, p. 148) defines the public sphere "as a constellation of communicative spaces in society that permit the circulating of information, ideas, debates, ideally in an unfiltered manner, and also the formation of political will". A public sphere must permit public dialogue. Political homophily is an important matter as it concerns the ability of social media to form rational public spheres in those echo-chambers. The idea of echo-chambers raises fundamental questions pertaining to the 'rationality' of the 'informed citizen'—not the partially informed or the selectively informed. It further questions the open mindedness and 'openness' of the Habermasian public sphere. It is crucial to recall that Habermas did not conceive a public sphere of like-minded people, who agreed on all matters of public opinion. Hence, it is ideal for people on social media to be exposed to alternative ideas involuntarily as were with corners and commons in the original public sphere. However, we observe the distinctiveness of social media in the displacement of the public sphere model with the framework of the networked citizen. This network centred citizen model provides the alignment between the private spheres of autonomous political identities with a multitude of chosen political spheres (Papacharissi, 2010). This also means more personalised politics is increasingly being played out in social media networks. The downside of echo-chambers is that they spark fundamental questions regarding freedom, democracy and self-government as liberty and freedom of choice and the

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ability to make rational choices are being increasingly removed from the direct agency of the citizen as a political actor.

The study of homophily is made complex by the dichotomy which social media present. The existence of homophily on social media can be counter argued on the notion that the internet enhances the heterogeneity of political opinions and discussions. One could contend that political diversity on social media is made possible by the following: (1) hypertexuality, (2) decentralised information presentation, (3) encounters with unavoidable political diversity and (4) malleable social boundaries due to the compression of space and time. On the contrary, some studies (Garimella et al., 2018) prove that social media does not seem to reinforce democratic public sphere deliberation more than it reinforces prior political opinions due to selective exposure of political opinion. The propensity to select information and interaction has resulted in the tendency to prefer partisan information. Access to partisan news is associated with declining exposure to alternative political opinions. Partyism is a kind of visceral, automatic dislike of people of the opposing political party, similar to the way the situation is between members of the ANC and the EFF. A surprising finding from Garimella et al. (2018) study is that partisan users, defined as those who produce predominately one-sided political content, are more popular on Twitter than bipartisan users who propagated 'balanced' political content. This finding insinuates that people prefer partisan political news which ultimately cultivates homophily.

Although selective exposure theory has traditionally treated a preference for opinion reinforcement and aversion as equivalent, in reality, it is more complex than this. Empirical evidence confirm that many people are interested in seeing perspectives that deviate from their own—many people are open minded. Garrett (2009) similarly found no evidence that people dismiss political information with which they do not agree. However, when faced with an abundance of information, political attitude and ideology become primary definers of information selection (Colleoni et al., 2014).

In the second generation of digital democracy, social media have brought great potential along with concomitant challenges. There have been many claims made for the democratic potential of social media such as Twitter. Of particularly importance is the ability to re-configure power relations propelled by mass collaboration ensuing from the openness of social media networks. As Loader and Mercea (2011, p. 759) posit, "the citizens no longer have to be passive consumers of political party

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propaganda, government spin or mass media news, but are instead actually enabled to challenge discourses, share alternative perspectives and publicise their own opinions". On the contrary are sceptics such as Blumler (1999, 2018) who reject the democratic potential of social media due to the decadence of 'serious' rational debates, citing dystopias such as negative campaigns, celebrity politics, sensationalised public sphere, humour, extremism and socio-political fragmentation which in South Africa could be segregated according to race, ethnicity, migrant nationalities and political affiliations.

Building on an earlier 1995 notion of crisis in public communication, Blumler (2018) revisited the promulgation of this crisis in the social media age. He argued that the crisis still prevails and has multiplied. Of the political crisis identified in the social media age is the breakdown of political parties in favour of independent candidates as the case was with American Donald Trump. Moreover, ideological advance of individualism and the growth of populism are on the surge. Projected crisis in political communication are as follows: first is de-politicisation due to mainstream media encouraging media personalities in politics, and thus personal styles of political communication. This inculcates the presentation of politics as a zero sum game with winners and losers; the outcome of which is (second) the sensationalisation of politics with the oversimplification and stereotyping of politicians and politics. Third is the catapulting of the mainstream media into the position of surrogate opposition, leading to fourth, the abundance of political cynicism and fifth, the emergence of a chronic state of perpetual war between mainstream media and politicians as we saw a raging war between the media and Julius Malema in 2018. Last but not least is fake news. These are just some of the challenges of political communication in the social media age. Some of these are expounded in subsequent sections in their relationships to homophily and echo-chambers and are explored further on the data analysis. The first to be discussed is populism.

Populism is no longer an unusual form of politicking in social media, it has become the mainstream. For this reason, some variations of populism are evident in many social media sites of politicians, particularly of party leaders. Abertazzi and McDonell (2008, p. 3) define populism "as an ideology which pits a virtuous and homogenous people against a set of elites and dangerous others who are together depicted as depriving (or attempting to deprive) the sovereign people of their rights, values, prosperity, identity and voice". It seems that populism function best in unchallenged

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echo-chambers. I hypothesise here that populism becomes an essential political communication tool for politicians during divergent political issues deliberated upon social media. The more contentious the issue, the higher is the populism. In order to evaluate the degree of populism on the Twitter accounts of the four selected South African political party leaders during #ZumaMustFallcampaign in February 2018, I apply the following five (5) indicators of populism identified by Engesser, Ernst, Esser, and Buchel (2017):

(1) *Emphasising the sovereignty of the people*—centred on the sovereignty of the people, of which, elites are accused of depriving. Populists present themselves as the only group able to restore the sovereignty of the people.
(2) *Advocating for the people*—advocating for the people who are characterised as a monolithic group wanting the same thing.
(3) *Attacking the elite*—the elites are seen as the people's enemy as they are corrupt and self-serving with little regard for the people.
(4) *Ostracising others*—besides the elites, there are the dangerous others such as white capitalists, state capturers and politically aligned black tenderpreneurs (those who benefit from state tenders).
(5) *Invoking the heartland*—longing for an idealised conception of the community, a utopian past, not based on rational thought, but emotion which may not even be realisable in practice such as the Mandela years for example. Mandela is a good example for personification in politics which we explore next.

In social media, the personal becomes the political—the outcome of which is the blurring of lines between the public and the private political spheres. Social media expand the avenue for enhanced personal campaigning by placing the focus on the individual politician than the political party. Politics have become personified even in party-centred systems such as South Africa. It is for this reason that we delimit our analysis on South African political party leaders' Twitter accounts than those belonging to the political parties. Political communication has always been about personal encounters between politicians, the media and voters. The personalisation of politics is a returning theme in political communication from whence it was portrayed as a lamentable abomination of politics by the likes of Postman 1985 and Habermas 1989. Social media add to the process of personalisation due to the nature of their design and intimate

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nature (Enli & Skogerbo, 2013). Online political communication in this has become highly personalised wherein politicians are compelled to share their public image along with their private personas. This is precipitated by the popularisation of politics as celebrity culture and politicians as celebrities. Self-presentation, self-narration as well as self-defence have become dominant enactment of political communication on social media such as Twitter.

The fundamental concern of homophily in political chambers is the degree to which they do or do not affect and effect political opinion. One way in which the effect of the 'manufacturing of consent' by political leaders can be measured is through agenda setting and framing, the ability to affect the news coverage of the political issue at hand. Thus, political leaders who previously remained outside the realm of media production and mass information diffusion have now penetrated political communication as producers and not merely as subjects of political content. They now use social media such as Twitter not only as a direct communication tool but also to influence the news production process or to enter the news production process as sources. As a consequence, "journalists are now facing politicians in a multimodal communication environment, which means that they cannot solely rely on traditional journalistic methods of interviewing political actors and attending press conferences" (Ekman & Widholm, 2015, p. 80). When asking who has the upper hand on the source (politicians)–journalists' relationship, three schools of thoughts are presented. The first one is that even in the information abundance of the second digital age, mainstream media retains the power of political news selection and moulding. The counterargument (second school of thought) is that the mainstream media are losing the power in political communication as they are pushed into the rewriting and reactive response to political actors' (sources) unmediated communication on social media. Political actors as external information providers are increasingly challenging journalistic norms, convictions and discourses by correcting publications they consider problematic and attacking journalists in general. The third school of thought sees neutrality in the source (politicians)—that is, a journalist relationship that is constantly in flux and negotiable (Ekman & Widholm, 2015).

With the mainstream media becoming heavily reliant on social media and external sources for political news, the propagation of fake news in social media becomes a significant issue of concern. Fake news can be defined as information that is intentionally and verifiably faulty and can

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mislead public opinion regarding a political issue. Although not new, fake news has become a worrying issue on social media as it is unmediated and somewhat unowned. The sources of the fake news cannot always be known and regulated nor stopped on social media. Social media has a dramatically different structure than mainstream media technologies. In this way, content can be relayed among users with no significant third-party filtering, fact-checking or editorial judgement (Allcott & Gentzkow, 2017). Political leaders and the public at large, even media institutions, can propagate fake news to a large capacity of a globalised citizenry. This has obviously heightened concerns about fake news in political communication. Hence it is crucial to establish how the selected politicians dealt with fake news with regard to the case study during the period of analysis. The findings and discussion are presented below.

Findings and Discussion

Political Communication Style

Political communication style is an important conceptual tool for exploring and outlining the coordinates for analysing the complex phenomenon of both homophily and populism. Communication style can be defined as "a heterogeneous ensemble of ways of speaking, acting, looking, displaying and handling things, which merge into a symbolic whole that immediately fuses matter and manner, message and package, argument and ritual" (Bracciale & Martella, 2017, p. 1313). Bracciale and Martella (2017) identified four (4) political communication styles on their review of Twitter use by Italian political leaders. Namely: engaging style, champion of the people, man on the street and the intimate style. I will discuss each of this in their designated space of a political leader that resembles such a style in our South African case study.

Cyril Ramaphosa joined Twitter in 2015. He was the deputy president of the country and the standing president of the ANC at the time of the campaign. He is now the President of the Republic of South Africa. As of November 2018, he had 361,819 followers. He follows only two accounts: @MYANC and @PresidencyZA. Cyril is a serial retweeter mainly from these two accounts he follows. His account is administered by public relation official(s). There is evidence to this effect, [1]@biasseDDD, "Eh Cyril-Loyana (witchcraft), how do you give a speech live on TV and also tweet simultaneously". Another one, @Ofensewisemen, "So you tweet while

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delivering a speech"? People seemed irritated upon establishing that @ CyrilRamaphosa is not responsible for his personal account. Despite this, there is a considerable engagement within his account among users themselves. Finance minister, Tito Mboweni, recently asked his followers if he should similarly hand over his account to a public relation agent as he was about to re-join government. The outcome to his twitter poll was a resounding No! This outcome demonstrates the preference of users to engage politically with politicians themselves, and not PR representatives.

The political style that resonates with Ramaphosa is the 'intimate style'. His political speeches demonstrate an intimate narrative style that is delivered in the first person. The intimate style is generally positive. This personalisation communication style entails sharing emotions and aspects of one's private life. It reflects personal storytelling, reminiscent of chit-chat and self-disclosure. Although this style is noted in his posted political speeches, it was not evident on his Twitter engagement. This is due to the fact that the Twitter account of Ramaphosa is administered by public relations agents. The account is not personal, and as a result, the political communication style is a rather impersonal cut, paste and broadcast. The tweeter feeds read much like a press release. In most cases, the content would in fact be cut from press releases of various statements that he was delivering as the president of the ANC. The tweeter feed is not user-friendly as it would be if the statements were hyperlinked in full into one tweet (as opposed to a series of tweets)—the reader must read back to front. On Feb 7, @CyrilRamaphosa, in a series of tweets, clarified developments on the #ZumaMustFallcampaign as the president of the ANC. I have assembled them into a single quotation to summarise the background context of the political climate during the final two weeks of the #ZumaMustFallcampaign. This series of quotations also provides a sense of his personal communication style (that does not reflect on the PR-administered Twitter account):

@CyrilRamaphosa (07/02/2018): "Fellow South Africans, there has been a lot of speculation and anxiety about the position of President Jacob Zuma as the head of state and government of our country. I would like to clarify some matters in this regard".

@CyrilRamaphosa (07/02/2018): "Last night, President Zuma and I began direct discussions on the transition and matters relating to his position as the President of the Republic. The discussions were

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constructive & lay the basis for a speedy resolution of the matter in the interests of the country & its people”.

@CyrilRamaphosa (07/02/2018): “On the basis of the progress made, it was agreed to postpone a special meeting of the #ANCNEC that had been scheduled for later today. This will enable President Zuma and myself to conclude our discussions and report back to our organisation and the country in the coming days”.

@CyrilRamaphosa (07/02/2018): “However, I am certain that the process we have now embarked on will achieve an outcome that not only addresses these concerns, but also unites our people around the tasks that all of us must necessarily undertake to build our country”.

@CyrilRamaphosa (07/02/2018): “While the current situation has necessitated the postponement until further notice of the State of the Nation Address, the work of government and Parliament will continue”.

Mmusi Maimane, Leader of the Democratic Alliance (@Our_DA), joined Twitter on September 2010. He has 1 million followers and is following 723 accounts. Like Ramaphosa, Mmusi’s tweets characterise a personal communication style. Maimane always attempts to be personal, using Setswana language as a bridge and partaking in social media chit-chat and humanising himself as a man on the street who can enjoy collegial everyday humour that has nothing to do with politics. On Feb 1, he tweeted a picture of a woman and a man shaking hands at arm’s length, wearing a church uniform. The caption of the picture reads, “*Mosadi was Motho o Domediswa Jaana borra*” (another man’s wife is greeted this way, gentlemen), himself tweeting,

> *Dumelang Bagaetsho. #happyFriday. I thought this was funny. Let’s continue to work together, celebrate who we are as a people, and build our beautiful country. Ka Setswana re a tle re: Pula (let there be rain).*

The church uniform and the language are indicative of Mmusi, the man who is a priest and a MoTswana. He begins every tweet with a Setswana greeting, “*Dumelang Bagaetso*” (greetings family). This exaggerated affiliation to his home language and culture is a pertinent one considering the critique he incurs from the black caucus. He is perceived as a sell-out for marrying a white woman and being a DA leader, which is considered a white party and representative of apartheid. Therefore, his blackness is perpetually in question. This is an avenue which the public use to criticise

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him on Twitter. On Feb 2, Mmusi tweeted: “Let us all pray for rain”—there are many references to Christianity, morality and praying in Mmusi’s tweets. This reflects a certain personification (about him) that defines his political style as lacking aggressive vulgarity. His political communication style fits the ‘engaging style’ described by Bracciale and Martella (2017, p. 1319) that denotes “a non-aggressive communication style, aimed at engaging the audience in political topics in the campaign, promoting one-self and one’s party and calling support to arms through calls for action”.

Julius Sello Malema, commander in chief of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), and a revolutionary activist for radical change, joined Twitter on February 2010. He has 2.2 million followers and is following 623 accounts. Malema’s tweets border on speculative conspiracy and ‘breaking news’. On Feb 6 @julious_S_Malema tweeted: “The man (Zuma) has unleashed the whole syndicate to go to Cape Town tomorrow and buy some NEC members to vote in his favour after the majority of NWC members spoke in favour of his removal”. The key to Julius Malema’s success on Twitter is his urgency to break news especially about ANC matters which they themselves may have not yet brought to the public’s attention, due to their ancient customs of political consultations, bureaucracy and secretive diplomacy. Malema is always one step ahead of the ANC to the point that he seems to be setting the agenda for the liberation party. During the last two weeks of the #ZumaMustFallcampaign, when there was a news blackout caused by the ANC going in and out of meetings about the matter but not communicating the progress to the media and the public, Malema filled this void by leaking the outcomes of ANC meetings to the public (true or not). Some tweeps appreciated this urgency, whilst others did not.

Malema also used the ‘urgency mode’ similarly identified on DA Mmusi Maimane’s account. For example, Feb 6 @julious_S_Malema tweeted, “he (Zuma) will resign anytime from now”. The difference is that whilst Maimane’s urgency was ridden with panic that the country is on the verge of despair, Malema’s urgency displayed a brazen confidence that ‘even if the ANC drops the ball, we got it’ type of attitude. This attitude resembles the ‘champion of the people’ political communication style. “It is an aggressive communication style primary aimed at representing oneself as a defender of the people against the elite” (Bracciale & Martella, 2017, p. 1319). The champion of the people uses negative communication to discuss political issues in a cynical register based on simplification, position-taking and taboo breakers. As a champion of the people, Julius Malema

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relies on another political communication style that I have identified as *revolutionary youth radicalisation* which mobilises the youth into political positionality and political action within an ideology of 'blackness', 'us' against 'them'. For example, on Feb 7 @julious_S_Malema tweeted:

> *Where are the young people and students of our country? Why do you entrust your future in the hands of people who sold us out? We need the militant and radical youth and students to take to the streets and reclaim our future from these old fraudsters @MyANC.*

There are many examples of this nature. This style directly communicates with the youth. It is instructive, incites them and places responsibility on them.

Bantu Holomisa, MP and president of the United Democratic Movement (UDM), joined Twitter on February 2013. He has 340,400 followers and is following 7438 accounts. Holomisa's Twitter style demonstrates a man on the street style. This style intersects negative communication and personalised communication. This style exploits the fear and everyday concerns of the people to legitimise himself as one of the people. He speculated and gossiped, as well as we did. Not knowing what was happening, he relied on the news media, as we did. The majority of tweets were linked to newspaper clippings from various news outlets. Bantu did not communicate much about his own political party which awarded him major criticism from the public. His political communication strategy of conspiracy theories made him malleable to fake news. His strategy projected on what might or might not happen, sort of providing political analysis (as pundit) than political campaigning. For example, on Feb 1 @ BantuHolomisa tweeted:

> *"It's true. Zuma and his trusted ministers, are plotting to embarrass Cyril". Feb 4: "@MYANC, at last the message has been conveyed. I am sure Zuma told them, go jump, hence they are calling for an urgent NWC". Feb 6: "#SACP accuses Zuma of using ethnic mobilisation to defend himself & also plan to ditch out CR from government".*

Some people were not impressed by these speculative conspiracies: @ litemba—"developing gossips", @cindy-mcgae—"stop causing panic over nothing". Another critique, "you and Malema deployed spies within the ANC to feed you news akere?".

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Sometimes, Holomisa was just there to cause a stir. Feb 9: "Haaahaaa by the way why @MYANC wants Zuma to resign? When did they realize that he is a liability? Give them hell Nxamalala!". However, for the most part, Holomisa's communication style was/is prescriptive to the ANC—which obviously fits the pundit's role (political analyst). The pundit is an expert in political matters. Feb 2: @MYANC—"U allow him to cross that reconstructed bridge, u will pay dearly. Given that he is in a tight corner; he can decide to go loose… Remember he has access 2 top classified files, watch out!". This was also met with a lot of criticism that @Holomisa is obsessed with the ANC whilst neglecting the chores of his own party.

This section contains examples of how politicians dealt with fake news during this political crisis. @BntuHolomisa on Feb 6 tweeted: "enca.com/South-Africa…Zuma will be hosting Russian president Putin from 8–11 Feb. Everything must stop". Whereas, Ramaphosa, Maimane and Malema did not comment on this, Holomisa propagated it on his timeline. Even when one tweep disclaimed that, "SABC has confirmed that the Russian President visit is fake news", people continued commenting on Putin's visit as if it were true. For example, Feb 7: @sapolnews, "the last thing SA needs is Putin's interference" and @Foxyjones2—"true or not, we don't want Putin in South Africa, we have enough pure evil here". This failure to acknowledge correction of fake news demonstrates cognitive dissonance and undue faith on the news propagated by a 'reputable' political source. Another correction came on Feb 7—"General (Holomisa) jumping on the fake news band wagon". Another critique, "you busy spreading fake news. Your obsession with Zuma is appalling". Added to these corrections from the public was also a correction and apology from the eNCA. However, dissonance persisted and people continued on their opinions of Putin's visit. Holomisa never retracted or apologised for propagating fake news. Another fake news during this time was that President Zuma would fire Deputy President Ramaphosa and replace him with his ex-wife, Dr Nkosazana Zuma. Holomisa entertained this one too. On Feb 6 @BantuHolomisa tweeted: "Zuma preparing to fire Ramaphosa: SACP enca.com…". Of the 68 comments on this tweet, in response, only two attempts of corrections were made and the rest assumed the allegation was true. These examples of fake news prove that homophily breeds the spread of fake news and increases the likelihood to which they are believed by followers of the echo-chamber.

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Other Agenda and Discourses Post #ZumaMustFall

Mmusi Maimane is almost the only one who had parallel agendas beyond the Zuma Must Fall campaign. Whereas other political leaders tweeted primarily and almost exclusively about #ZumaMustFall, Mmusi was dealing with Day Zero water crisis in Cape Town and concentrated also on DA marketing and general campaigning as well as engagement with other news. He intersected these two discourse brilliantly on Feb 13: "News that Jacob Zuma is recalled brings rain to Cape Town". So Maimane was not comprehensively 'captured' by the #ZumaMustFall campaign as the case was with Holomisa and Malema. Ramaphosa comes second on engagement with other news, particularly ANC campaigning and ANC centenary celebrations.

@BantuHolomisa after #ZumaMustFall attempted to set the agenda on state capture, the future of the Guptas and those implicated in the 'Zuma saga' including Malusi Gigaba. Feb 17: "Honeymoon is over for this faction & others who are missing in this story". He also attempted to influence the 'new' Ramaphosa cabinet, particularly who should deliver the budget speech. Feb 18: "give us a new minister who can eloquently sell the country's new dawn". Like Maimane, he also lamented VAT increases. In general, politicians moved on after Zuma fell and there was very little mention of Zuma post February 14, except on comments for him, the Guptas and Gigaba to account for corruption. Similarly, the public moved on when commenting on politicians' Twitter timelines. Other discourse discussed by Malema were race and racism—he went back to these as his normal discourses. On Feb 1, @julious_S_Malema tweeted: "Please @ EFFSouthAfrica don't do anything stupid, just prepare a petition or open a case. We are civilised people and we respond violence with roses" (linking a racist video of a white man slapping a black man who was seated at a bar, while ridiculing him, laughing 'with' and at him). This tweet accumulated 797 comments, 2.4K retweets, 2.2K likes. With this kind of data, Julius Malema does not feel like he needs the mainstream media to get to the public; he already has access to the public. We shall explore this further on the section of media rations.

Engagement with the Public

In general, I found very low interaction between politicians and the public. Politicians post tweets and then do not respond to comments, good or

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bad. They respond to journalists, other politicians and other prominent people. This demonstrates the permeation of traditional news values of 'prominence' online and on political communication. Like journalists, politicians respond to prominent people.

Feb 2: Ramaphosa retweets @MYANC: "ANC national officials led by ANC president Cde @CyrilRamaphosa are in the Limpopo Province this weekend visiting the VhaVenda king, Bapedi King, Balobedu Queen, Shangaan and Tsonga Chiefs". Visiting ethnic traditional leaders demonstrated a high degree of homophily. The surprising finding from comments emergent from a set of these tweets is that when Ramaphosa visited a particular ethnic traditional leader, the comments would be populated mainly by the ethnic group of the traditional leader being visited and would speak in the local language of the ethnicity. For example, "#ANC National Officials at the Venda Royal House, Dzanani, ahead of a meeting with the VhaVenda King, T Mphephu" was populated by Venda-speaking people, the same was the case with the Pedi and the Shangaana visits. With further investigation, it emerged that this homophily had nothing to do with tribalism as much as it was the general nature of Twitter to gather a community of resonance and like-mindedness. For example, a Twitter message about Kagiso, Alexander or KwaMashu would be populated by people from those areas or who are interested on the subject. This further proves the existence of homophily on Twitter. It confirms that like-minded people gather themselves around a tweet (message), much like Castell's notion of social networks that gather for a purpose and disperse in the aftermath. I found that there would be very few comments unrelated or contrary to the topic, but those would be marginal. This suggests that echo-chambers are moderately permeable.

@CyrilRamaphosa has been growing with popularity, particularly ensuing his ascendance to the presidency. The public have been @mentioning, @responding and @retweeting him, all without response. He provided no feedback to the public, primarily because it is an impersonal account administered by 'spin doctors'. At best (or at worst), one would find a response from @CyrilRamapostponer which is a parody account. This is obviously detrimental for participatory democracy. It was found on this chapter that the public uses @CyrilRamaphosa account in a very prescriptive way, advising on what they would like to see him do as president and what it would take for the ANC to attract, regain or maintain votes. For example, @Sipumze8—"Jobs above all, Mr president do something about this". The question remains if anyone is reading this feedback and advising

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him about their contents as a vital source of public opinion and a tool for effective governance.

There was a unanimous clamouring for Zuma to go on Ramaphosa's Twitter during #ZumaMustGo. For example, Feb 6: @Abutijosef: "when are you showing Zuma the exit door? Phela these are the views and aspirations of the people". There were many of this kind of tweets ahead of Zuma's resignation. The majority of the public found a way to respond to every tweet (about any subject matter) with "Zuma must go! Or when is he going". There was very little support for him to stay and those who articulated those 'alternative' opinions were harshly reproached. Defending Zuma proved to be suicidal, as backlash was often harsh. This suggest that even if echo-chambers are moderately penetrable by alternative opinions, they are dissonant and punitive of oppositional opinion.

There is minimum engagement with Mmusi's Twitter account from the public, the majority of his tweets went without comments (although they were retweeted and liked). This indicates a 'broadcast' function of social media in political communication. In total, Maimane uses Twitter to engage with the echelons of his own party, administrators and DA members. For example, he engaged with Gavin Davis about seven (7) times, responding and retweeting him. Others include Athol Trollip, Gwen Ngwenya, Phumzile Van Damme and Sandy Van Hoogstraten. Maimane engages with people in the DA who he is already personally connected. This insinuates that the structure of cyber-relations follows real-life connections. This is also a reasonable indicator for the existence of an echo-chamber, A DA house of like-minded people.

There are a lot of comments to Malema's tweets, @mentions and @ retweets by the public. @julious_S_Malema Feb 4:

> *He (Zuma) refused to resign and he told them to take a decision to remove him if they so wish to do because he didn't do anything wrong to the country. He's arguing that he compiled with all legal instructions including paying back the money, what more do we want from him.*

This tweet accumulated 4.8K retweets and 5.9K likes. I conducted a quantitative analysis of the first 278 responses. The findings show that 142 were preferred readings (in agreement), 80 were negotiated meanings (inclusive of off-topics) and 32 were oppositional readings (disagreed, retaliated). This proves the extent of homophily and the existence of an echo-chamber on the EFF Malema's Twitter account.

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Engagement with Other Political Parties

There is not much that can be analysed from Ramaphosa's engagement with other politicians as his, proved to be a broadcast Twitter account. There were no responses, retweets or mentions of other politicians. When engaging with other politicians, Mmusi Maimane used the affirmative strategy, and not the attack one used by Julius Malema. Example, Feb 6 Mmusi retweeted @SizweMpofuWalsh of the EFF, "The delay of the SONA shows the importance of the opposition. In years gone by, the ANC would have steamrolled through, now it can't". Maimane also retweeted Mbhazima Shilowa (@Enghumbhini) of COPE, "The ANC will pay dearly for treating the matter of the removal of JZ, as president of the country, as an internal matter". In general, Mmusi retweets content that was affirmative to his own narrative and positionality, thus demonstrating concord with them. He did not engage with the political views that are contrary to his own, in an attack, reframing or corrective mode. Dissent with oppositional parties did not feature. In general, Maimane did not address alternative political ideologies or opinion. Their absence on his Twitter crystallises a high extent of homophily. This further confirms that the DA is an echo-chamber that is sometimes penetrated by attackers. Maimane and other political leaders did not mind the oppositional parties, as long as they articulated opinions that accorded with their own political stance. @BantuHolomisa mentions @MYANC and engages with it more that he does with other political parties. Surprisingly, there was very little mention, response or links to other UDM politicians. Holomisa's 'man on the street' political communication style encourages him to remain non-aligned, engaging with politicians from a variety of parties and with various journalists and media houses. Ramaphosa is not at his house—so no data there. Malema also did not engage with many politicians. The only time he did, he assumed the affirmative strategy. I would have imagined that given his political persona, he would use his Twitter to attack politicians and issues that he did not approve of. However, in February 2018, this did not happen.

Engagement with Journalists

Maimane did not personally engage with journalists except for showing support for Peter Ndoro and two engagements with JJ Tabane, wishing him well on his new show *Frankly Speaking* on SANBC 3. Andile Makinana

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(@scapegoat) tweeted, "EFF's Delisile Ngwenya spoke so many truth!". In an attempt to reframe the agenda, Maimane responded, "yep, she was excellent. So was @Zilevadamme (Phumzile VanDamme)". This was met with a lot of retaliation. Obviously this was not at his own house (echo-chamber), but a public space, a house belonging to a journalist. Therefore, it can be concluded, that politicians incur a lot of resistance when entering neutral spaces or oppositional spaces belonging to a different party than they do in their own domains.

There are fewer examples where Mmusi attempted to set or rectify the media agenda. Replaying to Songezo Zibi, former Business Day editor who had retweeted about Herman Mashaba's allegation that he had hired his wife's company to assist with the insourcing of security personnel in the City of Johannesburg. "Why is the DA and media so silent on this"? He had asked. Of which Mmusi responded, that the story is completely false and a press ombudsman complaint was filed against *The Sowetan*. "The story in the Sowetan and @BDliveSA is a fabrication, we have requested a retraction from Sowetan". In this example, the DA succeeded in resetting the agenda. On Feb 21 Mmusi was retweeting @SAfmnews—"Johannesburg Mayor Herman Mashaba has accepted the apology and correction by the Sowetan newspaper relating to a story published on Monday". This demonstrates the powerful use of social media, by politicians, to reset, reframe and correct journalistic content. Furthermore, Maimane demonstrated another political power of social media to set the agenda as a news source. After Malusi Gigaba's budget speech, DA launched a national petition opposing the increase of VAT—as an anti-poor tax. A series of tweets about this petition were utilised by a number of media platforms.

@BantuHolomisa has a friendly approach to media relations. Feb 10—Holomisa replied to Andile Makinana, a journalist, who tweeted, "Parliament postponing SONA, for a political party to sort out its internal mess"; his response—"just to massage the ego of a crime suspect". He further responded to *The Star*, on Feb 26, that former police minister Fikile Mbalula confirms being fired. Holomisa responded, "if that's the case, he will focus on 2019 election"—confirming his pundit role, providing political analysis to media outlets. Moreover, he has responded to @mailandguardian Feb 11, @eNCA, Feb 17 and @SundayTimes Feb 22, amongst others and Justice Malala (broadcast journalist). In conclusion, Holomisa is the most media friendly of the four politicians; he engages with individual journalists and with various media houses. He links various

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media clippings with almost every tweet. He approaches the media online. This brought diversity to his Twitter account and a lot of attacks from other Twitter chambers as he would enter those spaces responding to other politicians from oppositional parties and journalists from different media outlets. It can be argued, therefore, that Holomisa displayed the least political homophily of the four selected political leaders in South Africa. His Twitter account also does not sufficiently fulfil indices of a Twitter echo-chamber as it is diverse in the opinions of commentators, even though his news section and retweets of other politicians are in concord with his own ideology and opinion.

@julious_S_Malema Feb 1: "We banned ANN7 long time ago and we don't have any sympathy for them at all. They are not a media house but instead a criminal syndicate, stealing from the poor" (339 comments). Feb 18: @replying to @NickolausBauer, "shem…Juju dropping bombs about the ex when he still wants people to believe he's over it". Malema's response, "Next time we must take you seriously and give you interviews, sies". The evidence on these tweets suggests an antagonistic relationship with certain media outlets. As I write 2018, the media is engaged in a raging war with Malema who 'banned' the eNCA media outlet from attending his events. They are retaliating by mobilising an embargo for all media and journalists to shut him out completely. He did not seem threatened with 2.2 million followers. This 'war' has garnered more support for Malema and further popularised him. As a result, tweeps are accusing the media of a conspiracy of using Malema to destroy Zuma and now they are attempting to neutralise him—suggesting a changing relationship between then (during #ZumaMustFall) and now.

Populism

President Ramaphosa's populism centred primarily on invoking the heartland, which is a longing for an idealised conception of the community, a utopian past not based on rational thought but emotion. Nelson Mandela, the first president of the post-Apartheid South Africa, who was a member of the ANC is often invoked for this purpose. Mandela accrued a reputation of near-Messianic dimensions, "He (Mandela) lived on the cusp of time, embodying a people's hope, yet monumentalised on a scale ordinarily reserved for the dead" (Nixon, 1991, p. 43). As a liberation struggle hero, by the time he gained his liberty, Mandela had acquired an almost posthumous eminence. The ANC not only associate themselves to Nelson

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Mandela as a party that still embodies his vision and hope, but also as a reminiscent symbol of anti-Apartheid. For example, @CyrilRamaphosa tweeted on Feb 11:

> *Comrades, we meet here, in this historic place and on this momentous day, to officially launch the centenary celebrations of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela. On that day, our people witnessed not only the return of a great revolutionary and freedom fighter, but the beginning of the end of a system that the world had a described as a crime against humanity.*

Ramaphosa, unlike any of his presidential predecessors, is closer to the Mandela spirit as someone who was a confidant and worked closely with him for many years. This is his personal political branding that he reminds voters about. Here is a tweet that exemplifies this. Using the 'advocating for the people' dimension of populism, Ramaposa portrays himself as the near Mandela, able to unify 'the people' and avert civil war amongst them. This is evidenced by the following tweet @CyrilRamaposa:

> *If you look at the way in which Mandela handled challenges in his Presidency, he was always very careful. He put the interests of our people first and he was clear about uniting South Africans and uniting the ANC.*

Mmusi Maimane also invoked the heartland in his populism. The DA always attempt to market their political brand of the rainbow nation, which was coined by Mandela. For instance, @MmusiMaimane tweeted:

> *We remain grateful for all that Madiba did for our nation, and for the values he espoused. His vision of a united, democratic, and non-racial South Africa that is prosperous is a vision the DA shares, and fights for each and every day.*

Maimane emphasises that they are the only party in South Africa committed to the values of reconciliation that Madiba espoused. "Where others (political parties: my addition) actively mobilise race against race, community against community, we are devoted to the idea espoused in the opening words of our constitution, that SA belongs to all". Maimane do not only invoke the Madiba's vision of a rainbow nation that is united and reconcilable, but uses other populism communication styles.

The much notable style of populism used by Maimane is on advocating for the people who are characterised as a monolithic group wanting the

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same thing, for Zuma to fall, which often intersected with attacking the ANC as the elite that is corrupt, self-servicing and inconsiderate to the needs and the demand of the people. Maimane uses 'we' a lot and often talks paternalistically about what's good for South Africans. A tweet in point, Feb 7: "We can't keep SAfricans in limbo, let parliament take its rightful place. It's not Luthuli house, it's the people's parliament setup by the people for the people". There are many examples of this nature, "Let's move with urgency. It's for our people". It seems there was limited use of populism by Bantu Holomisa since much of his postings were summaries of newspaper clippings (rebroadcast news with a hint of analysis)—except Feb 7: when 'advocating for the people', "#we have forced ANC to postpone SONA for valid reasons because we care about SA" and Feb 11: invoking the heartland: "what would Madiba say about South Africa today?" The Populism of @julious_S_Malema comprised of predominately attacking the elite (ANC) and advocating for the people. Feb 7: "No one can defeat the power of masses…, the masses must take over now and reclaim their country from @MYANC cowards". Malema do not have many examples of invoking the heartland. He does show signs of 'ostracising others' on contentious discourses such as land. The dangerous others for Malema are white monopoly capital, and quite recently, the 'white' media.

On our case study, populism also enhances the dominant use of social media amongst politicians which proves my hypothesis that populism becomes an essential political communication tool for politicians during divergent political issues. Indeed, the more contentious the issue, the higher the populist form of communication. In this case, three out of four politicians used populism on their Twitter account during the #ZumaMustFall campaign. An additional surprising findings was the high use of populism by Mmusi Maimane of the DA, which was not considered a populist political party. Albeit Malema's EFF was identified by Sthembiso Mbete (2016) as an ideological populist party, his use of a populist political communication is beneath that of Mmusi Maimane. This insinuates that a political party that is not necessarily populist in its ideology can use populism as a political communication style. How politicians used Twitter to spread populism ideology proves that the technology accords political actors the latitude to articulate their ideological positions, market and defend them in addition to seeking mobilisation for them. So in this way, populism is able to support homophily—which in turn builds echo-chambers. Hence we discuss homophily next.

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Homophily and Political Chambers

The findings in this chapter demonstrate that homophily is not necessarily about political alignment to the political party. Although this is natural, there is still internal disagreements. Homophily is about political opinion. This is the reason people would agree with a politician of a different party and easily disagree with an opinion of their own party leader. Another reason for this is that during the #ZumaMustFall campaign, people had become politically nonaligned and uncommitted. In this vacuum of a political home, their alignment rallied behind opinions that resonate with them than they did with parties. Politicians are able to create their own echo-chamber with a particular ideology in the information they chose to tweet, retweet, respond to and in the content they choose to hyperlink. Tweeps that follow the politician become the residence of the Twitter echo-chamber. I found that a majority of those who respond on habitual bases would either be members of the party or those that are sympathetic to the party or politician. Thus the conclusion on this study suggest that there is a reasonable homophily on political leaders' Twitter spaces (echo-chambers), that could sometimes be penetrated by a merger of attackers, who would be brought to task by members of the host echo-chamber. Therefore, echo-chambers do exist, but they are penetrable. However, politicians meet a lot of resistance when entering neutral spaces (e.g. media—eNCA, SABC, etc.—or responding to a non-member public) or oppositional spaces belonging to a different party (e.g. @MYANC, EFF, DA, etc.). This could indicate that most people align (follow) Twitter accounts that resonate with their political ideologies and very few follow oppositional Twitter accounts. Such is the foundation from which black Twitter emerged wherein there are fewer whites. In the same way there is white Twitter, or Indian Twitter, wherein there are fewer blacks. There is journalist Twitter and celebrity Twitter; there are many assemblies of Twitter. It can be expected that if one is to enter black Twitter with a white agenda (or vice versa) they will be metaphorically torn into a thousand pieces. Another example is Ferial Hafajee's poll on whether the media should impose an embargo on the EFF on which she linked (@mentions) the EFF. The outcome of the poll was negative as members of the EFF voted no and commented with profanity. All these examples prove the strength of homophily on Twitter. The final section is the conclusion.

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Concluding Remarks

A paramount finding on this study is that there is a direct causal link between populism and homophily. For example, Mmusi Maimane's account demonstrates a higher extent of populism and a higher extent of homophily, whilst Bantu Holomisa's account demonstrates less populism and less homophily, which means that there is a direct link between the two. Further studies are needed to establish the causal factor and variables associated with this link. It is also essential to investigate the degree to which these politicians succeeded in setting and controlling public opinion by conducting an agenda setting and framing study on selected newspapers to see how much of the tweets of politician were used as news source on this #ZumaMustFall case study.

The most celebrated impact of social media on digital democracy has been its disruptive capacity for traditional political practices and institutions inclusive of challenging notions of what is categorised as democratic participation. The malleability of social media offers the prospects of innovative modes of political participation and political communication that transcend the constrictions of rational deliberative exchanges. As proven to exist in this study, I argue, therefore, that echo-chambers are not necessarily a negative political feature of digital democracy but are an alternative form of political deliberation, that is unique from the singular argumentative public sphere towards the fragmentation of many agreeable public spheres. In combination, these disparate public spheres are able to deliberate politically, perhaps not as individuals per se, but as groupings of divergent political opinions. The public sphere concept is dependent on how Twitter is analysed. If Twitter is looked upon as a social medium probing social coherence, or information diversity on a particular platform, then political homophily is observable, but when analysed as an information medium, reflective of a diversity of political information and opinions in general, then diversity is observable. I conclude that even though there is homophily as politicians attempt to create their own echo-chambers, Twitter brings forth diversity as the public permeates political echo-chambers seeking resonate political opinions. These findings confirm that echo-chambers are not as rigid, static and impenetrable as suggested by Cass Sunstein (2001). I also found a direct link between populism and homophily and also a link between politicians' personalities and their political communication styles on Twitter.

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Note

1. Usernames for Twitter users other than the four (4) identified politicians have been used without real names (as online personas) considering that real names are sometimes not made available by the users.

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CHAPTER 11

An Analysis of Newspapers' Coverage of Hate Speech in Nigeria

Sunday Ogbonna and Achike C. Okafo

Introduction

Hate speech is a global phenomenon. According to Merriam-Webster dictionary (2018), hate is defined as an intense hostility and aversion usually deriving from fear, anger or sense of injury. Hate speech are wars waged on others by means of words (Kayambazinthu & Moyo, 2002). Hate speeches in Nigeria have become an issue of concern, which now receives significant attention even from legal authorities. Eziebe (2015) sees hate speech as any speech, gesture, conduct, writing or display which could incite people to violence or prejudicial action. Essentially, such speeches rob others of their dignity.

Hate speech is widely contested. According to Gagliardone, Gal, Alves & Martinez (2015), multilateral treaties such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) have sought to clarify the concept. Yet, "hate speech continues largely to be used in everyday discourse as a generic term, mixing concrete threats to individuals' and groups' security with cases in which people may be simply venting their anger against authority"

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(Gagliardone et al., 2015, p. 7). Definitions of hate speech tend to be broader, sometimes encompassing words that are insulting to those in power, or derogatory of individuals who are particularly visible. For instance, Benesch (2014) noted that the word might refer to the speaker/author's hatred, or his/her desire to make the targets of the speech feel hated, or desires to make others hate the target(s), or the apparent capacity of the speech. Important research has emerged from the study of the role hate speech had in atrocities or major outbursts of violence (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2010). Segun (2015) states that hate speech employs discriminatory epithets to insult and stigmatize others on the basis of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or other forms of group membership. Hate speech is often the gateway to discrimination, harassment and violence as well as precursor to serious harmful criminal acts. This chapter sees hate speech as speeches made to demean people, based on certain identifiers, such as race, gender, sexuality and ethnicity, which may predispose them to acts of violence.

In a recent report, Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD) stated that 221 cases of hate speech and dangerous speeches were reported in March 2018. The CITAD report stated that ethnicity and religious-related speeches occupied the highest percentage of 39.9%—hate speech relating to the issue of farmers/herders clash was 3.1%, while elections was the least with 2.2%. CITAD disclosed that analysis of the cases indicated that ethnicity and religioun-related hate speeches occupied the highest percentage with 39.9% and 37.7% respectively, in Nigeria.

The report also stated that ethnicity and religiously related hate speeches occupied the highest percentage with 39.9% and 37.7%, respectively. It also revealed that majority of those engaged in hate speech are male with 92.3% while the female gender has 2.7% and 5% concealed their gender. It added that the issue of the farmer/herders' clash was 3.1%, to that of election showing the least with 2.2%.

According to the Recommendation No R (97) 20 of the Committee of Ministers on "hate speech" dated 1997, Appendix to the Recommendation points out that the term "hate speech" is to be understood as a term covering all forms of expression which spread, incite, promote or justify racial hatred, xenophobia, anti-Semitism or other forms of hatred based on intolerance, including intolerance expressed by aggressive nationalism and ethnocentrism, discrimination and hostility against minorities, migrants and people of immigrant origin. For the purpose of this chapter, the definition by Mihajilova, Bacovska, and Shekerdjiev (2013) can be drawn from the discussion held by experts and numerous proposals for defining "hate speech" thus:

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> Hate speech is a kind of expression designed to promote hatred on the basis of race, religion, ethnicity, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, class/social origin, physical or mental disability

Most comparative research on hate speech focused on the divide that exists between the American and European approaches to regulating hate speech (Bleich, 2013; Rosenfeld, 2012). The Institute of Human Rights and Business (2013, p. 2) warned:

> 'Hate speech' has become a catch-all term that often encompasses both illegitimate expressions that can be banned under international law, and legitimate, if, offensive expression. Mixing these two kinds under the same heading is problematic

The Centre for Information Technology and Development (CITAD, 2016) defined hate speech as:

> Any speech act that is aimed at inciting the audience to denigrate people on the basis of ethnicity, religion, gender, geography and any other socially conceived parameter with the purpose of marginalizing them or placing them at some disadvantage that is contrary to the provisions of the universal declaration on human rights as well as the international covenants on rights of the people. (CITAD, 2016)

Scholars have argued that the concept extends to expressions that foster a climate of prejudice and intolerance which may fuel targeted discrimination, hostility and violent attacks against others (Yanagizawa-Drott, 2010). As an aftermath of the 2007 presidential elections in Kenya, Human Rights Business (2013), some politicians were arrested for engaging in hate speech and inciting the electorate to violence. Specifically, Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto (currently serving as President and Deputy President, respectively) were indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes against humanity for their alleged roles in orchestrating the 2007 post-election violence which led to the death of over 1000 people with other 600,000 people displaced. In the case of Rwanda, where an estimated 800,000 to 1 million people were killed (Danning, 2018), there are abundant examples of hate speech promulgated by the media. The newspaper *Kangura* started an anti-Tutsi and anti-RPF campaign in October 1990 and published the infamous "Ten Commandments", which specified amongst other things that Hutus who married Tutsi or engaged

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in business with Tutsi would be traitors, and that all posts in politics or administration should be reserved for Hutus exclusively (Des Forges, 1999, cited in Scheffler, 2015).

Organizations that mediate online communication such as Facebook, Twitter and Google have advanced distinct definitions of hate speech that bind users to a set rule and allow companies to limit certain forms of expression.

Facebook policy rationale (2019) defined hate speech:

> As a direct attack on people based on what we call protected characteristics, race, ethnicity, national origin, religious affiliation, sexual orientation, caste, sex, gender, gender identity and serious disease or disability

Twitter rules and policies (2019) on hateful conduct policy see hateful conduct as:

> …violence against or directly attack or threaten other people on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religious affiliation, age, disability, or serious disease.

Google Prohibited Hate Speech Policy on YouTube (2019) stating:

> …violence or hatred against individuals or groups based on any of the following: age, caste, disability, gender identity, nationality, race, immigration status, religion, sex/gender, sexual orientation, victims of a major violent event and their kin and veteran status.

The rapid growth of access to the Internet has made it easy for people to have unlimited access to information, such that both positive and negative messages are spread through the Internet. The Internet presents new challenges for tackling the spread of hate speech (Gascon, 2012). Emergence of social media hate groups have added platforms such as Facebook and Twitter to their communicative networks (Ben-David & Matamoros-Fernández, 2016).

The unlimited awareness created by the Internet has made it possible for such hate messages or speeches to spread like wildfire. The effects of access to such messages know no bounds on the individuals who come in contact with such messages. People with negative (evil) intent often exploit the Internet for their advantage in the pursuit of negative agenda. They do this by posting hate messages or speeches to incite people or

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incite violence thereby aggravating an already tensed security situation in Nigeria (Adamu, 2013). However, unlike the mainstream media, the Internet lacks effective gate-keeping mechanism that could be used to weed out unwanted materials. With the Internet, every user is a potential mass communicator with the possibility of reaching a global audience. This is the challenge the Internet poses to peace and security. Hate speech first appeared in the social media before the traditional media were accused of having similar contents in Nigeria. Emerging literatures have examined hate speech that is used by men to target and harass women. Researches in these areas have focused on the ways that hate speech produced by organized hate groups is used to recruit new members, socialize new members, radicalize people and encourage ethnoviolence. Most literatures on hate and hate speech examined the practice and discourse of hate groups and hate crimes. It is against this background that this chapter examined *The Guardian* and *The Punch* newspapers' coverage of hate speeches in Nigeria and their frequency.

Research Problem

The research problem arose from analysing the following related objectives:

- First, the source(s) of stories reported in *The Punch* and *The Guardian* online/offline editions on hate speech issues in Nigeria
- Secondly, determining the section of *The Punch* and *The Guardian* online/offline newspapers featured stories on hate speech in Nigeria
- Thirdly, to examine the extent to which *The Punch* and *The Guardian* online/offline newspapers cover hate speech in Nigeria

The specific research questions asked in this chapter are as follows:

What are the source(s) of stories on hate speech reported by *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers' online/offline editions in Nigeria?

What section of the online/offline newspapers featured stories on hate speeches in Nigeria?

How frequent do *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers' online/offline editions cover hate speeches in Nigeria?

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Hate Speech

Hate speech lies in a complex nexus with freedom of expression, individual, group and minority rights, as well as concepts of dignity, liberty and equality. Its definition is often contested. In national and international legislation, hate speech refers to expression that advocate incitement to harm (particularly, discrimination, hostility or violence) based upon the target's being identified with a certain social or demographic group. It may include, but is not limited to, speech that advocates, threatens or encourages violent acts. For some, however, the concept extends also to expressions that foster a climate of prejudice and intolerance on the assumption that this may fuel targeted discrimination, hostility and violent attacks (Gagliardone, Gal, Alves, & Martinez, 2015). Hate speech as a concept has also been contested as too wide-ranging and open to manipulation, and narrower conceptions, including "dangerous speech" and "fear speech", have been advanced to focus on the ability of speech to cause harm and lead to violent outcomes. While hate speech is found—in some form or guise—in almost all societies, including those where the risk of violence is limited, the concept of dangerous speech aims one group against another (Benesch, 2012). Benesch proposed a framework that can identify a dangerous speech act based on (1) the character and popularity of the speaker, (2) the emotional state of the audience, (3) the content of the speech act itself as a call to action, (4) the historical and social context in which the act occurs and (5) the means used to disseminate it (including the type of language adopted, e.g. if speech is in vernacular, a person from the area where that language is spoken differently may hear it differently than if it is in the national language). Elliot, Chuma, Gendi, Marko and Patel (2016) defined hate speech broadly as a speech act that antagonizes or marginalizes people based on their identification with a social or demographic group. Much comparative research on hate speech, for example, has focused on the divide that exists between the American and European approaches to regulating hate speech (Bleich, 2013; Rosenfeld, 2012, cited in Gagliardone et al., 2015). The mass media, both online and offline, are important for communicating hate speech.

Mass Mediation

The media are the major means of information dissemination and to catch a glimpse of the happenings in the society or meet a psyche need; some

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read newspapers or magazine or both, while some others watch and listen to television and radio, respectively (Nwabueze, Nnaemeka, Umeora, & Okika, 2015). Thus, the primary functions of the mass media institutions are the gathering, processing and dissemination information. Aina (2004) defines the information role as the process of informing and transmitting ideas from a source to a recipient, this information can be used interchangeably as news, facts, data and knowledge and can be accessed by user. The media also have a watchdog in society. The watchdog role involves the process of monitoring the behaviour of people, objects or processes within systems to ensure conformity to expected or desired norms in trusted systems for security or social control (Bassey, 2016). Information should be regarded as a vital resource that needs to be properly developed, because it has an effect on society. Most democratic societies have entrenched in their constitutions freedom of the press in order to ensure that the media can adequately inform and educate the citizenry about events in and around the society, as well as uphold the universal right of the citizens to know. Thus, the media are the professionally required to be objective in their reporting of events, whether positive or negative, so that the citizens could make informed decisions. This reporting function of the media is regarded as fundamental to the existence of both the state and the citizenry. This was aptly demonstrated by Thomas Jefferson in 1784 when he asserted that, "…were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without government, I should not hesitate to prefer the latter" (Tuchman, 1978, p. 166). In the words of Cohen (1963), the media "may not be successful in telling their readers what to think, but are stunningly successful in telling their readers what to think about". Media organizations have the onerous task of providing information that will not only inform and educate the citizenry, but also assist them in making informed decisions that will help in the day-to-day running of the polity as well as enhance stability and peaceful co-existence among the constituent units. To achieve this, media organizations are required to be professional (objective) in handling, processing and disseminating news so as not to deliberately or inadvertently promote violence. However, in spite of this professional requirement, media practitioners are required to be socially responsible in news contents and slants of news presentation.

Thus, just as the media cannot afford to engage in unprofessional conducts, they cannot afford to become irresponsible or insensitive to the

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socio-cultural and political inclinations of the people. A media organization is deemed to be relevant as long as it professionally meets the interest and the needs of its audience(s) and the community. Thus, every media organization has the obligation of incorporating professionalism as well as the aspirations of the citizenry and those of the state in the performance of its duties. This reflects in the objectives of the Nigeria Union of Journalists: to preserve the tenets of the profession as well as enhance its ideals and to protect and advance the socio-economic and cultural interests of the community where they operate (Nnaemeka, Uvieghara, & Uyo, 1998).

Newspapers are among the major sources of information, opinion and analysis. They impart knowledge and influence the understanding of issues by their readers (Talabi, 2017). Anaeto et al. (2009) sees newspaper as an unbound publication both in print and non-print form and content of the paper can be read repeatedly. Data on the actual number of newspapers in Nigeria is difficult to come by. Information retrieved from the Nigerian Guild of Editors' website confirmed that only 27 national dailies, 5 magazines and 8 online media remain active in Nigeria as of October 2016. This goes to show that a good number of newspapers have folded up in Nigeria in the last two decades while others have simply transmuted through buy-outs or acquisition. Meyer (2004) and Alterman (2008) had predicted the imminent death of the newspaper. According to Meyer (2004), the "final copy of the final newspaper will appear on somebody's doorstep one day in 2043", which is just a couple of decades away.

Theoretical Framework

To examine *The Guardian* and *The Punch* newspapers' coverage of hate speeches in Nigeria, this chapter is anchored on the argumentativeness, aggressiveness and verbal assertiveness theory (Jibril & Simon, 2017). The theory states that highly argumentative individuals enjoy arguing and will eagerly and readily attack others' position and defend their own position on issues. While people low in argumentativeness often feel uncomfortable about arguing because of lack of motivation, desire and skill to argue.

According to the theory, verbally aggressive individuals often do not provide as much evidence to support their argument. In many cases, these

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individuals possess verbally aggressive traits because they lack the skill to argue rationally and effectively and therefore use verbally aggressive messages as their defence mechanism. Thus, they often see violence as their only alternative (Infante, Trebing, Shephard, & Seeds, 1984, in Jibril & Simon, 2017). The tenets of this theory manifest in the behaviour and nature of interaction of newspaper readers in Nigeria. Individuals well versed in arguments enjoy commenting on issues in the public domain, using their prowess and argumentative skills to discuss the issues. Those who are not versed however exhibit a high sense of aggression in their comments and resort to use of insults and verbal attacks to counter positions held by co-commentators. It is in this regard that the tenets of this theory are found relevant to the study.

Methodology

Quantitative content analysis of two publications was made to detect the hate speech. Editions of early to mid-2018 editions were arrived at after the failed 'hate speech' bill which prescribed death penalty for an offender. Units of analysis in research, according to Keyton (2006), are standard observable units that offer "a consistent way of dissecting and analyzing texts. It could be a single word, a theme, a symbol or an entire story". The study units of analysis included *frequency* (number of times stories relating to hate speech issues appeared in the selected newspapers in terms of item count); *prominence* (page placement location—front page, back page and inside pages) and nature of story on hate speech issue (news, features, editorials, opinions) and moderate forms of hate speech; *justification* of historical cases of violence and discrimination; thoughts about the disproportionate superiority of one another ethnic or religious group; accusations of negative impact of one or another ethnic or religious group on the society and state; accusations of a group of attempted seizure of power or territorial expansion; denial of citizenship. Purposive sampling was subsequently applied to decide on the two titles selected for this study. The newspapers were chosen based on its circulation and reach.

According to Kerlinger (2000) as cited in Wimmer and Domimnick 2b (56), content analysis is a method of studying and analysing communication in a systematic, objective and quantitative manner for the purpose of measuring variables. From this definition we see that content analysis is

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systematic because it is a scientific process that is subjected to certain explicated and consistently applied rules and procedure. Secondly it is objective and free of any bias or input on the part of the researcher. Finally content analysis is quantitative which deals with quantification, that is, content analysis is an accurate representation of a body of messages (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011, p. 157).

A more suitable definition was given by Zitto (1975) as cited in Onabajo (2011, p. 79) who defined content analysis as a method by which researchers seek to determine the manifested contents of written, spoken or published communication by systematic, objective and qualitative analysis. From this definition, content analysis has to do with interpretations and seeking out the hidden meaning in written, spoken or published communication.

The unit of analysis of this study was each publication of *The Guardian* and *The Punch* newspapers' online/offline editions on hate speech. The study covered a period of 184 days which make up six months. This is to assess how *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers' online/offline editions cover hate speech issues in Nigeria. Content analysis suggests that all relevant content will be considered in terms of categories that are meaningful. The words found from the study as hate speech will be categorized under the following classifications:

- Social group: any spoken or written words that negatively categorizes a social group
- Individual: any written or spoken words about a person that threatens the image of the individuals
- Organization: any written or spoken words about any organization with aims to blackmail the organization
- Religious group: any set of words that is used to advocate incitement to harm any religion image

Recent studies from Nigeria by the ACSPN (2018) focused on analyses of media, particularly newspaper advertisements during elections (Albert & Co, 2009; Olatunji & Akinjogbin, 2011; Oluwatosin, 2015; Onwuamalam, 2014; Phillips, Roberts, & Benjamin, 1999) and on personality, but rarely on influence of political advertisements on voting behaviours (Edegoh, Ezebuenyi, & Asemah, 2013). Similarly, researchers observed that 64% of ads exposed in the 2012 presidential election in the US campaign were

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purely negative, compared to previous elections: "In 2000, it was 29%. It rose to 44% in 2004 and 51% in 2008" (Fowler & Ridout, p. 58).

Another study by the International Press Institute (IPC) and the Nigerian Press Council (NPC) (2015) found that newspaper reports of the election were skewed in favour of the All Progressives Congress (APC) and People's Democratic Party (PDP), with little or no attention paid to the remaining 24 political parties that participated in the 2015 election. A most similar study by Ibrahim, Pereira, Yau, Agbanyin and Bagu examined the escalation of hate speech in the build-up to the 2015 elections in Nigeria. The study found that candidates and political parties "used clearly unethical (hate and dangerous speech) communication content on the broadcast media and the internet platforms to campaign for voters".

In other clime, a study related to hate speech includes the research work carried out by Mihajilova et al. (2013) on freedom of expression and hate speech. It found that hate speech causes great harm to the particular individuals it is targeted to and the society as a whole. The study recommended the 'Camden Principles of Freedom of Expression and Equality'. The existence of a comprehensive framework to protect freedom of expression needs to give voice to the vulnerable and deprived groups in the society and criminal sanctions should be applied in cases of incitement to hatred.

Another study on 'Hate Speech in the Media and Internet' (2014) carried out in Kyrgyzstan regions of Chui, Osh, Jalal-Abad, Batken and Bishkek aimed at better understanding how local print, online and social media was portraying ethnic groups and whether the media outlets were contributing to xenophobic stereotypes and discriminatory discourse. According to the content analysis of the media, it revealed a range of factors facilitating hostility in the society such as ethnocentrism of the authorities, restricted access to minorities to the government of the state, economic and social inequality of ethnic groups, unsolved territorial and border issues and problems of access to natural resources faced by border area residents, underdeveloped multiculturalism in the society, alternative values and different ideological principles of various ethnic groups, widely spread nationalistic public speeches of politicians and officials and lastly lack of professionalism among journalists covering sensitive ethnic issues.

Another related study carried out by Bricks (2016) on hate speech online in Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany and Italyaimed at comparing

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the various realities pinpointing differences and commonalities. The study stated the different strategies of discussions on regulation such as public rules or policy referred to as "netiquette"; pre-moderation, where a few newspapers analyse all comments before publication; active moderation; removal of comments; forbidden words; time-limited discussions; users' 'classification'; rewards and loyalty programmes, and not to open or close a discussion.

Data Analysis Based on Research Questions

RQ 1: What were the source(s) of stories reported by *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers' online/offline editions on hate speech issues in Nigeria?

Figure 11.1 shows that 6 out of 10 of the stories reported on hate speech by *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers' online/offline editions were from individuals or the public with 14 (or 60.9%) of a total of

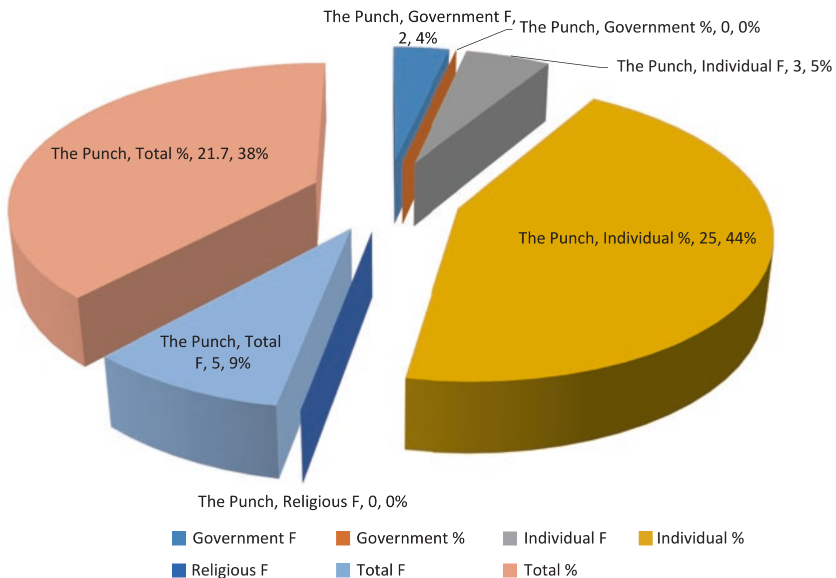

Fig. 11.1 Sources of stories on the coverage of hate speech

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23 stories content analysed on the issue, followed by government sources or officials on the issue with 3 out of 10 with a frequency of 8 (or 34.8%); while the least source of information on hate speech came from religious body with 1 out of 10 or frequency of 1 (or 4.3%) of the coverage on hate speech in Nigeria.

RQ 2: What section of the online/printed newspapers featured stories on hate speeches in Nigeria?

Figure 11.2 shows that 9 out of 10 with a frequency of 22 (or 95.7%) on the reportage of hate speech stories were carried on the inside pages of *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers online and published editions; while the least 1 out of 10 with a frequency of 1 (4.3%) on the issue was carried on the front page of *The Guardian* published edition. This shows that most stories were of the news genre on the reportage.

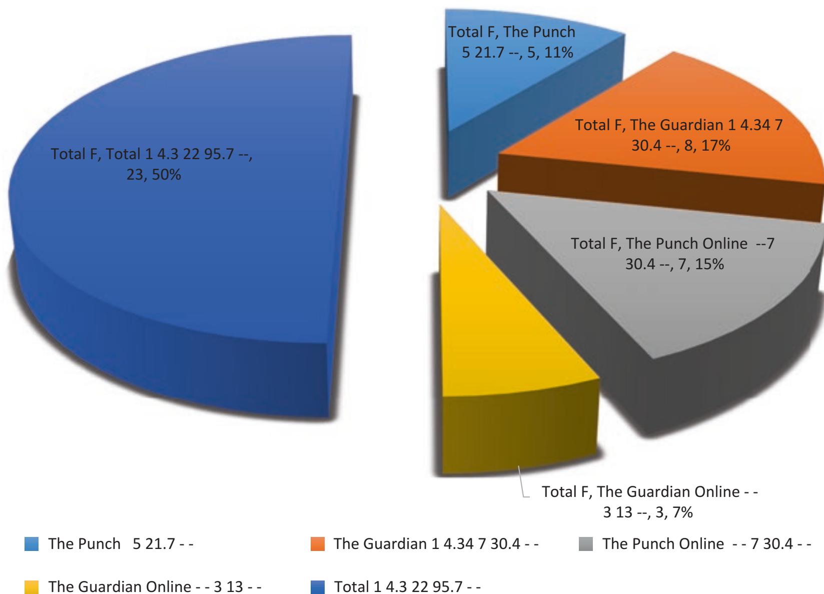

Fig. 11.2 Placements of hate speeches on *The Punch* and *The Guardian* online/offline editions

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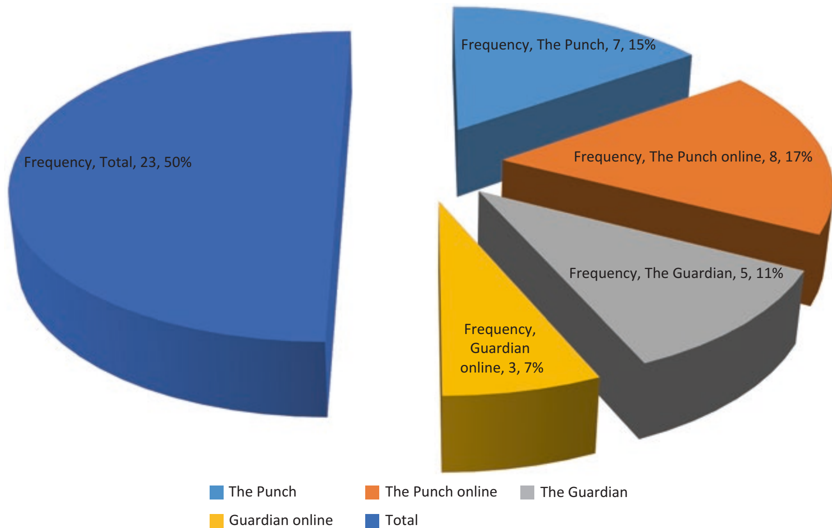

Fig. 11.3 Coverage of hate speech by *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers online and offline editions

RQ 3: How frequent do *The Punch* and *The Guardian* online/offline editions cover hate speech in Nigeria?

The result of the analysis on Fig. 11.3 shows that in terms of frequency of reportage of hate speech, *The Punch* (online) covered 34.8% (n = 8) of the hate speeches analysed, the published edition of the newspaper had 30.4% (n = 7) coverage, while *The Guardian* published and online editions had 21.5% (n = 5) and 13.1% (n = 3) of the coverage on hate speeches in Nigerian newspapers, respectively. This shows clearly that *The Punch* newspaper online and offline editions are ahead of *The Guardian* newspaper of both editions.

Discussion

This chapter examined the *Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers' (online/offline editions) reportage of hate speech issues in Nigerian newspapers. The two newspapers were content analysed from January to June 2018. All editions of the two newspapers (Monday to Sunday) for the six-month

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period were analysed. The first pie chart above shows that 6 out of 10 of the stories reported on hate speech by *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers online/offline editions were from individuals or the public with a frequency of 14 (or 60.9%) out of a total of 23 stories content analysed on the issue; followed by government sources or officials on the issue with 3 out of 10 with a frequency of 8 (or 34.8%); while the least source of information on hate speech came from religious body with 1 out of 10 or frequency of 1 (or 4.3%) on the coverage on hate speech in Nigeria. Most of *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers' online/offline editions reports on hate speech were from government officials, religious leaders and other organizations who are warning people about the implication of making hate speeches or individuals/public who reacted on the death penalties advocated by through a bill for passage by a few legislators to stop hate speeches in Nigeria.

In response to the second research question: "What section of the online/printed newspapers featured stories on hate speeches in Nigeria"? the pie chart shows that 9 out of 10 with a frequency of 22 (or 95.7%) on the reportage of hate speech stories were carried on the inside pages of *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers' online and offline editions, while the least 1 out of 10 with a frequency of 1 (4.3%) on the issue was carried on the front page of *The Guardian* published edition. This shows that most stories were of the news genre of the reportage.

The third research question on: How frequent do *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers online/offline editions cover hate speeches in Nigeria? As data revealed, on the frequency of reportage of hate speech issues, *The Punch* (online) covered 34.8% ($n = 8$) of the hate speech issues analysed, the published edition of the newspaper had 30.4% ($n = 7$) coverage, while *The Guardian* published and online editions had 21.5% ($n = 5$) and 13.1% ($n = 3$) of the coverage on hate speeches in Nigerian newspapers, respectively. This shows clearly that the two newspapers reportage on the issues of hate speech in Nigeria is inadequate given the six-month period content analysed. Similarly, the results indicate that *The Guardian* online/published editions had most of the report on the issue of hate speech with 45.5% ($n = 5$) in the month of March. *The Punch* online/published editions had 33.3% ($n = 4$) of the coverage in the same month on the issue. *The Guardian* (published and online) editions had 27.3% ($n = 3$) in the month of March, while *The Punch* (online/offline) editions had 25% ($n = 3$) in January, respectively. The months of February and May

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had similar coverage of 16.7% (n = 2) by *The Punch* online/published editions, while the months of June had 8.3% (n = 1), by *The Punch* online/published editions and 9.1% (n = 1) by *The Guardian* online/offline editions in January and June, respectively. The study clearly reveals the trend above that with an average of two stories and less than two for *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers online/published edition on the issue of hate speech, Nigerian newspapers did not pay adequate attention on the issue. The study further reveals most of the stories on hate speech by *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers' online/offline editions were in news form with a frequency of 7 (or 58.3%) and 8 (or 54.5%), respectively; opinion and features stories on hate speech followed with a reportage frequency of 2 (or 18.2%) and 2 (or 16.7%) for *The Guardian* and *The Punch* online/offline editions, respectively. This does explain the importance attached to the issue, but rather a matter of contingency. Again, the study shows that stories with 11–20 paragraphs were more with a frequency of 12 (or 52.2%) of the total coverage on hate speech issues (with half of the total coverage), followed by stories with 1–10 paragraphs with frequency of 7 (or 30.4%) of the coverage on hate speech, while the least was stories that were 21 and above paragraphs with a frequency of 4 (or 17.4%).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter examined *The Punch* and *The Guardian* newspapers' (online/offline editions) reportage of hate speech issues in Nigerian newspapers. The Nigerian newspapers gave inadequate coverage to the issue of hate speech (only 23 issues from 360 editions based on the published edition), even though most of the reportage on the issue is of the hard news genre. This may be further explained that in the same period, hate speech appeared on the front page of *The Punch* newspaper just once. Thus, the chapter findings point to the need for the following:

- The newspapers should educate the public on the issue of hate speech and how they can be prevented from committing such act.
- The media should encourage people to report any story that tends to express hate-related issues.
- Other media such as television, radio, journals and so on can join in creating awareness on hate speech issues and its implication to a country like Nigeria with multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, religious and cultural differences.

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- There should be dedicated newspaper pages for reporting such issues as hate speech and stories that bind people rather than separate them.

Lastly, some of the insights from the BRICKS (2016) study on online hate speech in Belgium, Czech Republic, Germany and Italy are recommended for the Nigerian context. There is need for different strategies hate speech regulation including public rules or policy referred to as "netiquette". These can encourage pre-moderation, whereby newspapers analyse comments before publication. Another strategy is active moderation which involves the removal of comments; forbidden words. Additionally, publications can limit the time for discussions as well as classify their users, offering rewards and loyalty points.

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CHAPTER 12

A Critical Analysis of Transgressive User-Generated Images and Memes and Their Portrayal of Dominant Political Discourses During Nigeria's 2015 General Elections

Chikezie E. Uzuegbunam

Introduction

With many online platforms such as social networks considered as alternative information sources for society, the notion of how text and talk are ideologically constructed and distributed is changing by the day. During the 2015 General Election in Nigeria, satirical images were disseminated across social media, containing both real life and cartooned photos of mainly the two key presidential election aspirants—Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari. These images went viral as they were shared by potential voters and election followers within Nigeria and in the Diaspora. The images are encoded with meanings about the political landscape—embodying varied representations of the political parties, candidates and other actors in the political process. Following this, it became important

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to unpack the meanings and taken-for-granted assumptions embedded in the images, not only through critical analysis, but also through the lens of media audiences, the young people who were engaged in focus group interviews for the purpose of this study.

Indeed, the digital expressive culture has become one of the most fascinating aspects of the intersection of the digital, politics and the Nigerian society. The new media is fast revolutionising the communications landscape, expanding the way information is created and generated, processed and disseminated. The technological affordances are being dramatically diffused, adopted and used in many regions of the world, even in developing economies. Not just that, many areas of society are benefitting from this change, one of which is the field of politics. In particular, social media offers a range of potentials for innovating governance and finding new ways for government-to-citizen interaction, from listening to citizens' needs and ideas and including them in agenda setting and decision-making processes, via increasing transparency and accountability, to improving service delivery (de Bastion, Stilz, & Herlitz, 2014, p. 8).

Although modern elections are still fought primarily over the airwaves, many potential voters are spending less time in front of their television sets and more time taking in news contents online (Ridout, Fowler, & Branstetter, 2012, p. 1). Of course, any discussion about the influx of new media into politics ought to engage sufficiently with its role in democratic processes and citizen engagement. Politicians are increasingly taking advantage of the Internet and its varied platforms as avenues to get more voters. Their time-honoured romance with the mass media especially at election times has steadily forayed into the new media. In Nigeria, for example, newspapers have been a significant medium used by politicians in spreading their manifestoes. Radio, on the other hand, remains a go-to medium for reaching the rural majority. Currently, the new media extends the reach of politicians and their accessibility to potential voters, audiences, supporters and fans, so much so that many Nigerian politicians now have dedicated campaign websites and social media accounts—managed by their spin doctors and media team.

The new media ecology challenges traditional news flows and brings in new realities to the table of political communication in many regions of the world. In particular, social media use is increasingly taking a dramatic and a phenomenal turn in many African societies. Specifically, research literature confirms that in parts of Africa, the uptake and diffusion of new digital technologies like mobile and smartphones and the

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'mobile internet' is increasing by the day (Chiumbu, 2012; Wasserman, 2011; Willems & Mano, 2017). Meanwhile, Internet penetration in Nigeria as of December 2017 stands at 50.2% with Internet users' population put at over 92 million (Internet World Stats, 2017). As the most populous African nation with a population of over 180 million people (Internet World Stats, 2017), Nigeria ranks 8th in the top 20 countries with the highest number of Internet users, after China, India, United States, Brazil, Indonesia, Japan and Russia (Internet World Stats, 2018). The country is composed of large number of ethnic groups, with varied political, socio-cultural and religious physiognomies.

In recent years, especially with the increasing diffusion, adoption and appropriation of digital technologies such as smartphones, the Internet and social media, digital memes, political satires or online parodies have become popular features of online political communication and digital culture, including in global South contexts like Africa. Likewise, they have become an increasing feature of elections, political transitions and other key political events around the world. Young, Holbert, and Jamieson (2014, pp. 1113–1117) proffer three dimensions of effects of online political satires. The authors argue that the act of sharing satires online is a signifier of social dimension and identity construction on the part of sharers; the play, emotion and laughter inherent in online political satires act as affective dimensions of engagement. And, the satires create a common political pop culture experience. Often, due to the long history of humour as a tool against oppression, in addition to the nature of political events and issues, political humour, satire or parody is oppositional or transgressive in nature (Pearce & Hajizada, 2014). As aestheticised art, cartoons, on the other hand, have been a strong communicator and a political weapon used even in journalism—newspapers, for instance (see Strømsted, 2017; Willems, 2011).

Elections in Nigeria

Democratic general elections in Nigeria are conducted every four years. General elections here are defined as elections into key positions of power in terms of the major arms of governance: the presidency, higher and lower parliaments (known as the National Assembly and the House of Representatives) and governorship positions. Elections are presided over by the electoral body in the country—the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC)—whose chair is usually appointed by the presidency

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and approved by the National Assembly. A look at the Nigerian political realm shows that the use of social media in Nigerian politics for the first time happened in 2011, during and after the general elections of that year. This development, some scholars believe, was a spin-off from the important precedence set since 2008 by Barack Obama and similar US political actors who were widely believed to have opened a new vista in political communication with their use of social media (Bimber, 2014).

Nigeria's inaugural use of social media for political communication in 2011 significantly coincided with other notable events that took place around the world the same year, particularly the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movements. Scholars like Fuchs believe that "2011 was a year of protests, revolutions and political change. It was a year where people all over the world tried to make their dreams of a different society reality" (2014, p. 2). By all means, Nigeria was part of this important change. An independent and ad hoc Social Media Tracking Centre was set up by the government to track the use and effect of social media during the 2011 elections. In their rating, the top presidential aspirants were found to be top users of Facebook and Twitter during the 2011 elections (Asuni & Farris, 2011).

Digital Culture and Political Satirical Discourse

Social media usage has surpassed other forms of Internet use, including email. To many users, social media like Facebook is the entry point and the face of the Internet today. This is especially true in developing contexts (de Bastion et al., 2014). In theory, the Internet has the potential to provide a virtual public sphere. By this is meant a space for online political debates, opinion moulding, access to duplicity of free information, political ideas and material and freedom to express oneself without surveillance. In reality, scholars are still interrogating the extents this has become true in African societies, especially in relation to the new structural transformation of the public sphere which draws on Jürgen Habermas's notion of the concept and which complicates the shifts between public and private structures constantly changing in function and form.

Satire is difficult to define but is often viewed as a subgenre of humour with an element of social critique embodying four elements in Western satire—aggression, play, laughter, judgement (Yang & Jiang, 2015, p. 216). Online political satires could be understood in terms of their being 'online performance art' and part of networked practices of online

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users that constitute playful ways of communicating about critical socio-political issues in online spaces (Yang & Jiang, 2015, p. 223). This suggests the new ways in which political satire is produced and shared, through the affordances of the digital media, to performers and audiences alike who engage in a performative blending of play, resistance, idea, action, the bizarre and the ordinary. Similarly, Wiggins and Bowers (2015, p. 1891) describe Internet memes as "digital artefacts" or "artefacts of participatory digital culture", presupposing the virtual physicality of online parodies, their socio-cultural role in the new media landscape and their inhabitation of a marked and purposeful production and consumption among online members.

Online political parody or satire is otherwise known contemporarily as Internet memes. Wiggins and Bowers (2015) traced the historical evolution of the concept of memes to a British evolutionary biologist, Richard Dawkins (*The Selfish Gene*, 1979). The authors opine that the meme has occupied a common and important place in its usage outside of academic circles which has a rooted history in academic epistemologies of linguistics, psychology and philosophy. In the current digital culture forcefully driven by the social media and social networks, Internet memes have become a daily occurrence and feature on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WhatsApp.

Several scholars have studied online memes in the attempt to not only understand the digital culture, but also to capture the crucial intersection involving Internet users, activism, citizens' resistance and political parody (Adegoju & Oyebode, 2015; Bayerl & Stoynov, 2016; Wiggins & Bowers, 2015; Willems, 2011; Yang & Jiang, 2015; Yeku, 2018). Among African studies scholars, "political cartoons and comic strips have frequently been analysed in relation to concepts of power and resistance and considered as ways in which those subject to power challenge the rulers" (Willems, 2011, p. 126). A few studies, although not enough, have focused on the ways in which memes and parodies reveal fundamental insights into political tensions in African countries especially at key periods such as elections (see Adegoju & Oyebode, 2015; Willems, 2011; Yeku, 2018).

In Nigeria specifically, the memes which circulated widely on Internet spaces during the election season in 2015 served as both socio-political, cultural and activist tools of resistance against structural issues such as corruption, electoral fraud, hijack of public discourse and public opinion, party partisanship and so on. There is the widespread

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belief that during the 2015 general election in the country, many Internet memes surfaced and provided a significant visual narrative of the contours of this significant election (Yeku, 2018) for social media users and non-social media users. Furthermore, Yeku (2018) argues that the memes served as reproducible ideas and viral Internet images were used to parody and ridicule certain political actors and to exercise political agency.

Theoretical Underpinning

Based on Stuart Hall's (2003) seminal work on the politics of representation, it becomes critical to explore how meaning is symbolically created through the signifying practices of representation—images, signs, language and media texts. As an essentially foundational concept in cultural studies, representation finds essence in critical analysis when it is used to describe the process whereby language, signs and images are used to symbolise something, to stand for or to denote something. Hall advances three main theories of representation; however, the social constructionist approach is employed in this study. With this approach, it becomes possible and meaningful to produce meanings about the social media images and memes which represent or symbolise various key notions about the 2015 general elections in Nigeria. With origins within semiotics studies as promoted by the Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, the constructionist approach supposes that the production of meaning depends on language, and language is a system of signs; and sounds, images, written words, paintings, photographs and so on all function as signs (Hall, 2003).

The present study also tapped into the Encoding and Decoding Model of Communication by Stuart Hall, who advanced the model in the early 1970s while analysing television audiences. The model offers a theoretical frame for looking at media messages and media audiences by arguing that media contents and messages such as news, advertisements, videos, images and similar texts can embody polysemic meanings or be encoded with multiple layers of meaning, which in turn can be decoded in different ways by different people. According to Hall, media audiences exercise discursive power when they make meanings and understand their realities by dismantling cultural symbols and signs in images, news, language and other texts found in the media.

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Research Objectives

Firstly, this research has the ambition, through semiotic analysis, to deconstruct the meanings embedded within the images and memes that circulated widely on social media during the keenly contested Nigeria's 2015 general elections and to map how these images shaped discourses during the election and possibly after it. Secondly, through focus group interviews, the study aims to determine the dominant personal and collective readings given to the images, how much the images influenced people's opinions about the election and the candidates, and finally, the sort of impressions the images and memes engendered on the political climate.

A few studies such as Adegoju and Oyebode (2015) and Yeku (2018) have paid attention to discursive practices around memes and how Internet memes and popular hashtags have enabled marginal political actors in Nigeria such as the youth to engage with dominant political dialogues and issues. This study's point of departure is twofold, however. First is a specific focus on election as a political event during end of 2014 and through March 2015—through which the role of political parody distributed via Internet platforms could be critiqued and also from the perspective of youth. Second is that audience-based methodology was used to supplement critical analysis of the Internet memes—thus strengthening the findings of the study. Although a number of memes were shared in 'social mediascape' before and well after the 2015 elections, this study does not account for any other period except for the period leading to and immediately the presidential election results were announced.

Methodology

This study made use of semiotic analysis and thematic analysis. Semiotics is the study of signs and the meanings loaded in sign systems. Having blossomed into a strong and widespread qualitative discipline, semiotics is concerned with the exploration of culture, society and natural phenomena as signs. Consequently, the fundamental question in semiotics is how meanings are formed through the signifying representational practices inherent in society, including language, images, objects and so on. Feeding into Stuart Hall's argument, human society is based on the production, use and exchange of signs and representations (Sebeok, 2001).

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The use of thematic analysis as a qualitative analytic method was essentially important in approaching the data from the focus group discussions held for this study. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes in a qualitative data. The FGD was conducted with 12 young people aged between 19 and 26. They were sampled through a snowball technique. There were two sets of focus group interviews conducted, comprising six youths (male and female) in each set.

Participants were drawn from university undergraduates and newly graduated young people. This demographic (youth) was selected because, as research literature attest, young people are the most active cohort in terms of new media use in Nigeria (Uzuegbunam, 2017). Other criteria include that they were active social media users, politically aware and informed, as well as social media savvy. Participants were asked questions to probe their familiarity with some of the circulated images and memes, their personal and collective readings of the images, the extent to which the images affected users' perception regarding the candidates and the elections and so on.

Findings and Discussion

Employing Hall's theoretical benchmarks for the politics of representation and the Encoding and Decoding Model, as well as the methodology of semiology, it became possible to uncover the implicit, taken-for-granted meanings and notions of dominance and resistance which played out in the significant but satirical memes. Furthermore, the opportunity was offered to explore the ways in which the memes were positioned as symbolic markers and signifiers of deeply rooted notions about the Nigerian politics during the electoral period and beyond.

The images and memes analysed were particularly those involving the two major presidential aspirants—the incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan, and his major contender, Muhammadu Buhari. This meant that other images which portrayed other aspirants were unaccounted for. The politically discursive images, which circulated in online spaces, were possibly hatched by young people. These humour merchants, empowered by their mobile devices and the social media platforms, created impressions of their bottled-up feelings using the images and memes. From the absurd, the mundane, to the humorous, the transgressive images and Internet memes wore a reflection of the realities and accounts of the electoral

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period in 2015, proving Yeku's (2018, pp. 219–220) assumption that they reflect "a new regime of citizenship" and "mediatised or performative political expression".

The images[1] contained both real-life mimed photos of the political subjects and cartooned replicas of same. They went viral as they were shared by potential voters and election followers within Nigeria and in the Diaspora, mainly appearing in the broader category of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs (Adegoju & Oyebode, 2015; Yeku, 2018), in addition to social networks such as BBM, WhatsApp and Instagram.

Unsurprisingly, a first glimpse at the images most likely triggers a comic reaction. Humour was a key feature of the focus group participants' assessment of the images from the point when they first surfaced online. For many of the respondents, the images were good enough for sheer comic relief at the time, since some of them helped to reduce the political tension experienced during the period. As one of the respondents observes: "Nigerians were in a state where they needed something to make them laugh, so the pictures came at the right time…" This corroborates Yang and Jiang's (2015) study which emphasises that online political satire may sometimes serve social functions and not always be about resistance, although they can be appropriated for political purposes. In line with this study, however, this comic feature of these images would later prove quite deceptive as according to the respondents, some people, particularly supporters of the incumbent president, took the warning signs embedded in some of the images for granted and, instead, stuck with the belief that the incumbent would win. What is more, the incumbent party, People's Democratic Party had been in power for about 16 years before then (1999–2015).

A second look and contemplation will see the images coming alive with very expressive signs and notions about the general political climate, especially for those who followed the news. The meanings embedded in the images are intertextual in nature: they not only depend on each other for full meaning and interpretation, they equally evidence other previous key events, stories and meanings which a viewer needs to have been familiar with, for some of the images to make sense. Explaining the extent to which online political satire is a 'networked social practice', Yang and Jiang (2015) highlight three dimensions: the process of production often involves multiple individuals collaborating online, dynamic and networked circulation and interaction, and "networks of meaning" (p. 217).

In the following sections, key findings from both thematic and semiotic analyses are outlined.

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Political Exclusion

During the election, and judging from the images, there appeared to have been a deliberate determination to exclude other political parties and to construct a narrative that it is only two political parties that are deemed normative and recognised in the country. As one of the focus group participants puts it,

> It kind of gave [them] pre-eminence, they had this added prestige, and they became the only parties people talked about because we kept seeing them everywhere. It made other parties seem as if they do not exist.

Political exclusion is also realised through the instrumentality of semiotic analysis. For instance, there is a cartooned meme which was one of the first images to emerge on social media just before the election. Here, the image of a malnourished or even a dead Nigeria, sprawled on a hospital bed, is both indexical and symbolic. The skeletal body which was labelled as "Nigeria" sends such strong message about the social, economic and political conditions of the country at the very time—or at least from the oppositional perspective.

Pictured beside the skeletal body are some of the key power brokers in the opposition party, All Progressives Congress (APC) including General Muhammadu Buhari, the presidential candidate, and Senator Bola Tinubu (the political godfather of the APC). These are portrayed as 'medical experts', but at the same time, seem to be mindlessly checking the pulse of the skeletal body. In this way, other candidates and political parties are excluded from the possibility of being capable enough to save the dying nation. Both the intravenous liquid and the drug in the image have APC inscribed on them, with an implied narrative that "only APC has the power to ensure that this dying country stays alive".

Political Agenda Setting and Awakening of Citizens' Political Consciousness

The focus group participants' opinions differed on whether the circulated images impacted significantly on the election outcome in terms of influencing voters' behaviours. Virtually all of them, including the few who voted in the election, thought the pictures were not formidable enough to have swayed their opinion and preference. However, there was unanimous agreement that the circulated images set certain political agendas and tone

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which seemed to target the less-informed electorates. Data indicated that the images awakened citizens' consciousness to have a better sense of what was going on and what was to unfold as regards the election outcome.

This finding is corroborated by studies such as Adegoju and Oyebode (2015) and Yeku (2018). The images 'prepared the minds of the people' on the uncertainties that lay ahead, through a deliberate, subtle conditioning of the citizens' minds to follow the messages being pushed out through the images. According to one participant, "they made many people politically inclined". This corroborates Yang and Jiang's (2015, p. 216) assertion that "practices of online political satire at their most political moments are not only critiques of power, but popular mobilisations against power." The question of making people politically inclined and awakening political consciousness is also affirmed through the semiotic analysis. Related to stirring of political consciousness is the "enabling of cultural and alternative spaces for resisting official sites of hegemonies" (Yeku, 2018, p. 226).

One of the images shows a sitting room in a house filled with people, including children and adults, gathered around the television set, watching the unfolding general elections. In some Nigerian homes, particularly within the less privileged contexts, it is commonplace to experience communal television viewing—where a family that has a television set opens its doors to disadvantaged neighbours and friends to watch or see an interesting TV programme, movie, football match and so on. The image in question resonates with this viewing culture since such contextual viewings took place in some Nigerian homes during the elections. The picture also shows the zeal that characterised these viewings, even in the most uncomfortable conditions ('the shirtless men' indicating the heat in the room caused probably due to human congestion and the heat from the power generating set).

The picture also signifies the disparity in the viewing behaviour between the adults and the young people found in this setting. Some of the adults are seen armed with pen and writing pads, dutifully recording the results. During the election, it was observed that many social media users took to their personal online accounts to post results of the election—results from their electoral constituencies and the national INEC body. Expectedly, these results were conflictual and generated tensions in the polity. In many ways, this image indicates the fervour with which the election results were anticipated, the tension in the atmosphere around the country as well as the political consciousness that enveloped both the young and the old, the poor, the rich and the bourgeoise.

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Gendered Power Relations

The semiotic reading equally reveals a gender undertone to the events surrounding the presidential election. In one of the images to surface much later in the electoral period, we see a mimed real-life photo of the wife of the incumbent president, Patience Jonathan, her face saying everything about her state of mind and apparent frustration over the election outcome which had seen her husband defeated. The image had a caption written in creole (Nigerian pidgin English)—"*Dem deva do election for First Lady, I no dey comot*"—translated loosely as "They have not conducted election for the position of First Lady, so I am not leaving with my husband". As hilarious as this may sound, the image was both indexical and symbolic because it highlights two key points about the former Nigerian first lady.

One of the points seems to be the fierce and strong personality which she epitomised. In fact, it was popular knowledge in Nigeria that she was more powerful than her spouse, the incumbent president. She was not only feared, she was equally controversial, politically shrewd and influential. This image singlehandedly uncovers the gendered dimension to the politics of the 2015 presidential election. Responses from the group discussions attest to this assumption and as one of the respondents notes, "Patience was seen as someone stronger than her husband during the election".

The second point is the fact of her widely talked-about 'illiteracy'. There were widespread evidences or occasions where the first lady goofed with the use of grammar and consequently committed what had been dubbed one of the greatest English blunders ever, so much so that her persona became synonymous with a comic character until date. The meme seems intended to feed into this underlying popular narrative by implying that the former first lady lacked the expected reasoning to understand that elections for first lady position do not get to be conducted. Moreover, the idea of using pidgin English rather than a well-constructed English in the caption drives home the point being made. This caricatured narrative on the only woman in Nigeria that was apparently one of the most powerful players in the 2015 elections raises some questions about the gendered dimension that should not be overlooked.

The Apolitical Netizens

Virtually all the focus group respondents confessed to having not voted during the 2015 election. Part of the reasons proffered for this was that

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they simply were not interested in politics and that they lacked trust in the candidates and the electoral system. This brings back to mind an enduring debate about young people and their non-committal attitude towards politics and citizenship (Bosch, 2013; Uzuegbunam, 2017). Research literature has evidenced the fact that the youth are the most online connected demographic in virtually every part of the world today, earning them the tag of 'netizens' and 'digital natives' to buttress their online connectedness. The question of their active engagement with social media and how this does not correspond to a proportionate offline political action and behaviour remains a contested focus of research in political communication. Quite a number of studies have shown evidence that for many youth across the world, online political satire and memes created by them or others, constitute one of their political expressions, and ways in which they are drawn to politics, and get involved in political discussions (Yang & Jiang, 2015).

Behind Every Humour, There Is an Iota of Truth

Responses from the focus group respondents demonstrate that although the images elicited humorous reactions from people, on a deeper level of connotation, they were loaded with and were constitutive of meanings such as political hatred, dishonesties, self-serving ambitions and political demonisation. This fits into Knobel and Lankshear's (2006) definition of memes as "contagious patterns of cultural information that get passed from mind to mind and directly generate and shape the mindsets and significant forms of behaviour and actions of a social group" (p. 199). For instance, the semiotic reading of one of the memes illustrates that Buhari (a former military dictator, reputed to be a vicious and unpopular crusader against corruption) is making a list of enemies who would be jailed once he assumes office. Most of the election results were in when this image surfaced except for a few controversial ones still being ratified by the national electoral body. This image went viral when it was almost impossible to imagine that he would not win the presidential election.

During his campaign, General Buhari was believed to have promised to bring Nigeria's past corrupt leaders to book if and when he gets into power, making this image iconic. The parodied image of Buhari making a list of people to send to prison was frowned upon as immature and unwarranted in a democracy by the young people in the focus group interviews. In another image analysed, erstwhile president, Olusegun Obasanjo, who

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was Nigeria's first major democratic leader is making a mockery of the incumbent president, Goodluck Jonathan—who is seen shedding tears—and his party. This image surfaced in online spaces when election results appeared to have tipped in favour of the opposition candidate and party—Muhammadu Buhari of the All Progressives Congress. At this point, the margin with which the opposition candidate was topping the incumbent had become too wide that the simplest imagination was that the president 'must definitely be in tears.'

It was not a secret that Olusegun Obasanjo was one of the most visible political enemies and critics of Goodluck Jonathan and his policies before and throughout the election. It came therefore as no surprise that the creators of this particular meme had his name first on their minds. In terms of dishonesty, the opposition party, APC, was believed to have employed propaganda and name-calling to smear the image of the incumbent president. Issues such as the Boko Haram insurgency, the missing Chibok girls, and the ailing economy were often used as pretexts to discredit the sitting government by the opposition whose aptly devised campaign mantra became "Change", further driving home the point about Nigeria needing a revolutionary change.

Cyber Fights and Cyberbullying

The focus group interview responses reveal that the images stirred up quite some cyberbullying and, consequently, hate speeches among social media users when they surfaced online. With many people now becoming increasingly online connected in Nigeria, comment sections of Facebook, blogs and Twitter feeds of news media platforms have become a beehive of cyberbullying and hate speeches. On a closer look, these 'online fights' have trappings of ethnic, political and religious tensions and contestations, and the two presidential candidates embody all of these nuances. While the incumbent president is a Christian from the South geopolitical zone and belonged to the dominant party, the opposition candidate is a Muslim from the Northern part of the country.

The point has earlier been made that Nigeria is a multi-ethnic, multi-political, multi-cultural and multi-religious entity divided along assortment of interests. Indeed, these separationist tendencies are increasingly creeping into cyber spaces and determining the ways citizens talk to, talk with and among themselves in the digital age where

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online anonymity empowers people to bully and denigrate others. As one respondent noted:

> These memes possibly caused cyber fights, like people fighting online and not the physical fight, people accusing each other because maybe for example, they are supporters of Jonathan and I post the picture depicting him as the loser, you will find that his supporters will not take it lightly with me.

The Media Question

In one of the images (tagged "Awaiting Result"), the two major political contenders, Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari, are pictured in a keen position with their ears glued to a radio set, in apparent anticipation of the election outcome. While this image depicts the uniform anxiety which was inevitably shared by both contenders since the election was certainly intensely contested, it further signified the unspoken reliance on the legacy media over the Internet media for accuracy and objectivity of information. This seems to suggest that the two presidential candidates did not rely very much on online news as much as they did on the mainstream media such as radio and television.

Definitely, there were disparities in election results as noted earlier, and these were engineered mostly by the wild-fire manner in which millions of citizens took to their social media pages to act as unsolicited election umpires, regulators and deciders. This brought about many inaccuracies in election results that circulated in online spaces, specifically. In an age of fake news, this raises a serious question about the media and especially online (new) media and the accompanying misinformation and damage done to society when people underestimate the power of the digital devices they wield. Also, there is the question of the implication of this trend for new and struggling democracies such as Nigeria and parts of Africa and the global South in terms of the impact of fake news, hoax, exaggerations and misinformation that find their way into online spaces and cause various damages.

Survival of the Fittest?

Contest for the presidency in the 2015 general elections in Nigeria was portrayed as being akin to 'survival of the fittest'. In one of the images,

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Goodluck Jonathan and Muhammadu Buhari are seen in a wrestling booth. Both apparently engaging in a power tussle suggests the ferociousness with which the political battle was fought and won. In the image, incumbent president Goodluck Jonathan had Muhammadu Buhari on the ground—suggesting defeat. This image circulated widely when election results suggested that the incumbent president could carry the day. Notice also how both power contenders are shown to have muscles—depicting strength and turgidity. Perhaps this is to create an impression around the physical and emotional adroitness that went into each candidate's campaign—and this is true in every sense. However, this image abandons the common knowledge that the opposition candidate was quite aged (was in his 70s, although it was alleged that he could be older than that) and had some health challenges at the time.

Similarly, in yet another image, the two presidential candidates are seen engaged in a 'INEC Kombat'—'Kombat' here derived from the popular American animated and live-action violent game, 'Mortal Kombat'. Their weapons of warfare were signified by the key symbols of their political parties: Goodluck Jonathan is wielding an umbrella whereas his opponent, Muhammadu Buhari, is wielding a pack of broom. The former's political party, People's Democratic Party (PDP) is symbolised by green-white-red coloured 'umbrella' which signifies the party being an ultimate unifying party for all Nigerians. On the other hand, All Progressives Congress (APC) wields 'a pack of broom' to represent their major campaign mantra, 'Change' and a sweep-off of the ills and incongruities that have bedevilled the nation, namely, corruption, poverty, terrorism and so on. In the image, conjuring up the significance of a 'Mortal Kombat', the opponent is seen flying high above the incumbent and coming down on him with a weapon, signifying some sort of upper-handedness on the former's part. Words such as "Finish Him!!!", "Fatality", "INEC Combat" are conspicuously inscribed upon the image to attach 'excess value' to the image or cartoon and to drive home the message of warfare between the two presidential aspirants.

Influence of 'the Superpower'

Here, there was the assumption that there may have been external influence(s) by the American and European governments, perhaps in subtle ways. In one of the images that surfaced towards the end of the election season, we see the then American President, Barack Obama,

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brandishing a pack of broom and slouching to use it on the floor, while some members of his cabinet look on in admiration and compliant amusement. This mimicry featuring the most influential world leader at the time showing solidarity for and confidence in the opposition party and candidate in Nigeria's 2015 presidential election is both indexical and symbolic. It suggests the possible vested interest that may not have been manifest, but which nonetheless determined where the pendulum swerved. The image carries an inscription which translates to "Even Obama is an APC member".

In Adegoju and Oyebode's (2015) study, there was a similar picture of the American president holding up a broom as a purported APC apologist, apparently "playing on the American factor and supposed support for the opposition party" (p. 659). The authors write:

> This meme, apart from serving social currency purposes in humour to boost support for the in-group, tends to release some psychological tension in the recipients, given the incongruity of capturing the acclaimed most powerful president in the world going unimaginably partisan to enthrone democracy in an African country.

There had been news reports alleging Obama's interference in the election. A recent book titled *Against the Run of Play*, authored by Olusegun Adeniyi, a Nigerian journalist in April of 2017, had statements by the former president Jonathan, which indicted Obama. The statements suggested the latter's resolve and connivance with the UK prime minister and the French president to have Jonathan removed from office. Photoshopped image no doubt, this image brought about a cataclysmic effect on the electoral atmosphere in the country at the time. It was popular opinion that long before the elections, President Jonathan had fallen out of favour with the American president and the British government. The cause of the rifts was not far from Jonathan's refusal to adopt the pro-LGBTQ policy and agenda, in addition to some unsettled ripples from the Boko Haram insurgency ravaging the country at the time. The focus group respondents equally believed that this image infuriated people against the opposition candidate. According to them, people became annoyed about how Obama could possibly have a say in the Nigerian election outcome. Hence, there was the possibility that this, according to one of the focus group participants, "pushed so many people to come out to vote for Jonathan" in order for the opposition to not win.

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Conclusion

This study explored, using semiotic analysis and data from focus group interviews, a number of user-generated images and memes which surfaced and circulated online during the presidential election period of 2015 in Nigeria. Broadly, the study has attempted to extend an understanding of political communication in the digital age by providing a more nuanced exploration of how social media users and the wider society attach meanings to digitally circulated, user-generated and transgressive images.

Since political images are increasingly transforming into semiotic sites of tension and resistance in many parts of the world (Bayerl & Stoynov, 2016; Pearce & Hajizada, 2014; Willems, 2011; Yang & Jiang, 2015; Yeku, 2018; Young et al., 2014), the study highlights the ever more considerable role that digital technologies could play in the political sphere. Arguably, the digitally expressive culture has become one of the most fascinating aspects of the intersection of the digital, politics and the Nigerian society (Agbo, 2016). This suggests the extent to which the iterative images may have enabled some citizens to exercise political agency in the face of the frustration and bottled-up grievances towards the hegemonic political system. This sort of nuanced way of voicing possibly prevents aggrieved citizens from taking to the streets and taking laws into their own hands through violent or other destructive means (Agbo, 2016).

Furthermore, it is relevant to note that some of the meanings and representations loaded in the analysed images and memes have today become self-fulfilling prophesies. For instance, President Buhari had won the 2015 presidential election and had come under increasing backlash for several unlawful imprisonments, witch-hunts and harassment of purported enemies of his since assuming office in May 2015. Also, in revisiting the analysed image of a 'dying Nigeria' in the context of how the country had turned out during President Buhari's tenure as president, the belief is rife among the citizens that Nigeria's physical and mental condition is worse than when the former president, Jonathan, was in power. This sharply contrasted scenario of an imagined (mimed) and real (authentic) Nigeria highlights the effusiveness inherent in media contents that had the intent to mislead.

Political satire could serve as a rebellious and deliberate strategy through which the people attempt to speak back to power albeit in a more implicit and entertaining way, and especially in contexts like Nigeria where political dissent and protests are still discouraged. The study therefore contributes

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to the growing scholarship on the role of satire, parody and meme in African politics, particularly in the digital age. The analysed images and memes were satirical; however, in many ways, they served as semiotic sites of tension, contention and confrontation, with significant representations about the political sphere and the larger Nigerian society during an important time in Nigeria's democratic history.

To be sure, the level and extent of imagination and iteration that went into the production and dissemination of these images because of their significance and apt depiction of the political period and atmosphere in the country must be appreciated. This is important, even when they may have originated from creative young people, trolls, mischief-makers or ordinary citizens. Although most of the images lacked quality and merely reeked of amateurism, the fact that they circulated within the polity and engaged the citizens in powerful ways than mere words is very instructive for democratic citizenship in the digital age. Hence, we are prompted to think and rethink not just the power of images—since a picture still speaks louder than a thousand words—but also about the ways in which the new media enabled citizens to make sense of a political event in simple but powerful terms.

Note

1. Some of the images and memes could be accessed via https://buzznigeria.com/15-photos-of-nigeria-election-campaign-depicted-in-the-most-funny-way/ (Udeze, 2018) and https://www.nairaland.com/2228289/funny-pictures-nigerians-waiting-election.

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CHAPTER 13

Discourses on Political Advertising in South Africa: A Social Media Reception Analysis

Siyasanga M. Tyali and Rofhiwa F. Mukhudwana

Introduction

Over the past five democratic elections held in South Africa, the role of the media and its perceived influence on the electioneering system of the country has grown (Tyali, 2017). It is evidenced by the growth of elaborate print political advertisements, broadcast and outdoor advertising available for public consumption. South Africa has also not been short of negative political advertising. However, these have been more prevalent during the country's fifth provincial and national elections in 2014. In this chapter, we are interested in the rise of political advertising and particularly negative political advertising during South Africa's elections season.

While historical scholarship on the subject matter notes "definitions of what constitutes a negative political advertisement have varied over the years" (Johnson-Cartee & Copela, 1991, p. 9), in our definition, we note that negative political advertising typically contains a one-sided attack on

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a targeted candidate which is designed to draw attention to the target's weakness, such as character flaws, voting record, public misstatements, broken promises and the like (cf. Pinkleton, Nam-Hyun, & Austin, 2002, p. 14). These types of adverts are typically described as mudslinging. While there are established research niche areas on these adverts in the global north (De Run, Weng, & Ming, 2013; Wattenberg & Brians, 1999; Zahedzadeh & Merolla, 2012), a gap is noted in the global south where the scholarship on the terrain of negative political advertising is rather lean. Hence, there is a growing need for a more focused understanding about the field.

Though there is some limited scholarship on the topic in South Africa (Africa, 2015; Boshoff, 2019; Calland, 2014; Davis, 2004; Fourie & Froneman, 2003), continuing research illustrates that some of the prominent negative political advertising campaigns have been distributed through print and outdoor advertising channels. With the growing presence of social media in South Africa, the electioneering campaigning process has moved into a terrain where the electorate are able to respond and voice their opinions through such platforms. Our focus in this chapter revolves around the intersection of negative political advertising with the electorate and the subsequent reception of such political advertising message through the analysis of social media messages. In this chapter, we have relied on the 2014 elections, which had the first televised and contested negative political campaign in South Africa.

Case Study Analysis: The Democratic Alliance's Negative Political Advertisement—'i-ANC Ayisafani'

The research underpinning this chapter took a typical case study format (Yin, 2017). The rationale of evaluating a particular case study was to develop a thick description of the reception associated with the case in question. Thus, in this chapter, the focus is on 'i-ANC Ayisafani', a large-scale negative political advertisement by the Democratic Alliance. The advert was briefly broadcast in 2014 in South Africa's fifth national and provincial general elections. It was also the first of its kind in South Africa in that it portrayed naked mudslinging toward the governing party on South Africa's largest television broadcasting platform—the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). Sparking controversy during this period was the banning and unbanning of the political advert by the SABC.[1] Ostensibly, this was done on the argument that the political advert

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did not conform to the country's standards of media regulatory bodies such as the Independent Communications Authority, as well as its associated regulatory laws—ICASA Act 2000 and the Electronic Communications Act 2005 (ICASA, 2014).

Strictly speaking, the typical process of broadcasting political campaigns is regulated and strictly controlled by South Africa's Electronic Communication Act of 2005. Therefore, the Democratic Alliance's 'i-ANC Ayisafani' political advert had to conform to the regulatory standards of the ECA 2005 Act. Roughly translated as 'the ANC is no longer the same', the Democratic Alliance's 2014 negative political advert was designed with a strict objective of discrediting the governing political party of South Africa—the ANC. The advertisement which was banned by the South African Public Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) portrays the Democratic Alliance's (DA) then spokesperson and now leader of the political party Mmusi Maimane, making serious corruption and maladministration claims against the countries' governing political party. The political advertisement argues that the governing African National Congress (ANC) has had some credible leaders in the past but since the year 2008, the political parties' corruption levels have increased. It also makes serious claims on how the political party benefits small politically connected elite of South Africa. With an audio-visual content that is captured reflecting the image of this organization in what appears to be a bathroom mirror, the advertisement states that (direct quotation):

> So they say they took South Africa forward. Life today is better, than it was 20 years ago. There have been some great leaders—leaders that have taken this country forward. You voted for them. But since 2008, we have seen president Jacob Zuma's ANC. An ANC that is corrupt. An ANC for the connected few—it's an ANC that is taking us backwards. 200 million Rand that's spent on upgrading the president's private house. We've seen a police force killing our own people. An ANC where 1.4 million more South Africans have lost their jobs. Where are the jobs, president Zuma? 'i-ANC Ayisafani'! Together we can bring hope, together we can allow an environment that creates jobs, together we can bring change for all South Africans.[2]

The visuals of the political advertisement include the image of President Zuma's private home in Nkandla as well as the image of a police officer pointing what appears to be an automatic rifle to two civilians. This political advertisement clearly falls within the ambit of negative political advertisement as it highlights the weaknesses of the party's rival and at the

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end offers its (DA) possibilities for the South African population. To make sense of how this negative political advertisement was received by the electorate, we looked at the responses of the political advertisement that were captured in the mini-blog and commentary section of a social media platform—YouTube.

Electioneering Through Negative Political Advertisements

While there are various perspectives that aim to define negative political advertising, growing literature illustrates that negative political advertising typically contains a one-sided attack on a targeted candidate which is designed to draw attention to the target's weakness, such as character flaws, voting record, public misstatements, broken promises and the like (Pinkleton et al., 2002, p. 14). Attack advertisements and negative advertisements are concepts used interchangeably (Pinkleton, 1997, p. 19). They are also commonly called mudslinging. These types of advertisements are not unique in the international arena of political campaigning. For example, attack political advertisements are popular in the United States of America (Perloff, 2013). Besides the case study that is under discussion in this particular book chapter, general examples of negative political advertising have historically been less prevalent in South Africa's electioneering campaigns. However, starting with the 2014 electioneering campaign, the DA seems to have adopted negative political advertising as its key signatory election marketing strategy. Most recently, this also seems to have been the case in preparation for the 2019 national electioneering season when the DA came under further attacks for another political advertisement similarly criticizing the ANC. The 2019 and most recent political advertisement bluntly stated that the "ANC is Killing us".

There are different types of attack political advertising and each potentially affects audiences differently. Some negative political advertisements focus on issues, others focus on image, while others incorporate both issues and image. Negative *issue* (emphasis added) advertising cites a candidate's position on specific issues or items of public policy (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1989) while negative *image* advertising cites a candidate's personal characteristics or traits without addressing issue positions (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1989 in Pinkleton, 1997, p. 20). Roddy and Garramone (1988, p. 425) counsel that it is wiser to address an opponents' weakness on issues than to attack the opponents' character or public image. In their

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study, they found that viewers of an issue adverts demonstrated significantly more positive evaluations of negative political advertisements than did viewers of an image adverts (Roddy & Garramone, 1988, p. 425).

There is a growing scholarship, which seems to illustrate that negative campaigns are now turning to a fusion of strategies and tactics that include the use of comparative advertising, which features some aspect of attack advertisement and direct candidate comparison (Pinkleton & Austin, 2002, p. 14). Comparative negative advertisements are in principle less malicious than attack advertisements. Comparative advertising uses a two-sided message in which the targeted candidate is identified and specific aspects of the targeted candidate's image and issues are compared and contrasted with the sponsoring candidate. Direct and implied comparative advertising are two types of comparative negative advertising. In *direct* comparative advertising, candidates are discussed or compared directly. The aim of the advertiser is to claim superiority over the targeted candidate. Implied comparative advertising on the other hand is one-sided in that it does not mention the targeted candidate specifically (Pinkleton, 1997, p. 19). There are also blame-placing political advertisements wherein a candidate or party is blamed for some policy failure, decision, event or worsening of some conditions (Roddy & Garramone, 1988, p. 418).

Researchers indicate that the purpose of negative political advertising during election times is to instill doubts among voters about the ability of the target candidate or party to govern successfully (Pinkleton et al., 2002, p. 14). Garramone (1984, p. 250) observed that the intended effect of negative advertising is "to create negative feelings towards the targeted candidate and positive feelings towards the sponsoring candidate". Likewise, some scholars argue that negative political advertisement can contribute to political campaign success. There is empirical evidence that people remember *negative* advertisements better than *positive* advertisements. According to Perloff (2013, p. 344), people psychologically have the propensity to remember and retrieve negative information more quickly than positive messages. On the contrary, Pinkleton et al. (2002, p. 14) found that participants exposed to negative advertising found it less useful for political decision-making and were more negative towards political campaigns than were participants exposed to positive advertising. This discourse on political advertising therefore allows us to contextualize and demarcate the field of negative political advertising as demonstrated by South Africa's 2014 provincial and national general elections.

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Regulation of Broadcast Negative Political Advertisement in South Africa

The premise underpinning this chapter is that the political advertisement under review marked an important turning point into the relatively new but growing practice of broadcasting negative political advertisements in South Africa. Leading up to the 2014 South Africa's fifth provincial and national general elections, there was fierce public and political debate on the state of political advertising (Grootes & Ngobeni, 2014; Sapa, 2014). The source of the debate was the decisions by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) as well as the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) to ban 'controversial' negative political advertisements. Though there were two examples of negative political advertisements by the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and by the Democratic Alliance (DA), which were banned by the national public broadcaster (SABC), the focus of this chapter is strictly on the advert that was created by the DA. This is due to the large and unprecedented media attention that the DA political advertisement saga received. It is also because of the mileage and arguably free/unintended mileage that was gained from the public and political discourse that surrounded this political advertisement.

Before 2014, there was no precedent of negative political advertisement on the national broadcaster. However, the possibility of negative political advertisement was accounted for in South Africa by the amended ICASA Act of 2013. Published as a national legislation back in 2009, the regulation of political advertising is concerned with the allocation of time slots of political election broadcast, outlining of the rights and obligations of each political party, as well as providing mechanism for solving disputes when they rise (ibid.). South Africa scholarship about the banning of controversial adverts indicates that there are recent examples of adverts being banned by the mainstream media of South Africa. The most recent example of such banned adverts by the mainstream media points to a 2012 Nando's advert that reportedly aimed to 'address social ills' of the country (cf. Golden, 2012). In spite of this adverts lofty ideals, Mboti (2013, p. 455) notes, "despite this attempted explanation, the advert was taken off air by the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), etv and DStv". While the Nando's advert tackles important social/political subject matters, it is important to note that it does not explicitly fall within the DA's negative political advertising example. The former is an example of a

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corporate campaign aimed at soliciting debate about social ill's affecting South African society while the latter is an example of a political party campaign aimed at influencing the voting electorate.

Social Media as a Public Sphere for Political Discourse During Election Seasons

The role that continues to be played by social media platforms in advancing social discourse on political and socio-matters continues to evolve. Particularly this has been the case recently when we focus our research on these platforms as public sphere platforms and enablers of political discourse. There is growing evidence, which suggests that the location of political advertising industry is no longer wedged between print, broadcast television and radio. The prominence of social media in political advertising is becoming more apparent. Political advertisements are increasingly placed on YouTube and in a variety of social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook. Perloff (2013, p. 344) demonstrates how contemporary political campaigns strive to gain a presence in the conversations of social media. The public sphere and political conversations administered in social media are much more edgy, quirkier and more youthful than one-way television advertisements (Perloff, 2013, p. 344).

Social media has increasingly become an important public sphere platform (cf. Fusch, 2013; Tyali, 2017). In most instances, social media platforms are often used as microblogs for expressing views and opinions about current affairs or any matters that are of an interest to the user. The world's popular microblogging sites include Facebook, Twitter and a Chinese site known as Weibo (Fusch, 2013). These platforms have become critical tools for gauging public opinion on topical issues. Such has been the case in the studies pertaining to the role of social media during the revolutions in Tunisia and Egypt (Philip et al., 2011; cf. Tyali, 2017).

In the context of this chapter, the focus is on the opinions that have been expressed on YouTube about the 'i-ANC Ayisafani' political advertisement. With the rise of the middle-class numbers and 'relatively easy' access to the internet in South Africa, analysts have noticed a trend where people suddenly had access to communication tools which allow them to publish their opinions on publicly accessible platforms (Ndletyana, 2014; Visagie, 2013). Fusch (2013) argues that people who microblog using

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social media often do this for the purpose of sending their opinions to a large number of people. Such acts often have politically embedded messages. In other words, social media can be a political public sphere platform where people raise their opinions on politically pertinent issues. ŞEN (2012) indicates that social media's real potential lies in supporting the civil society and the public sphere. It is further argued that social media has become a contested terrain, a platform for new forms of class struggle and expressions. Sometimes, they assist in national liberation and pro-democracy movements (ibid.). However, it is also important to warn against essential(izing) and over-estimating the role and potential of social media. Social media can never be a magic bullet, which solves all the democratic challenges of a society. It is one of several platforms that can simply be used to voice expressions on issues affecting the citizenry. Hence, the focus of this chapter is on perspectives between a controversial and negative political advertisement and the reception of such an advert by potentially voting citizens on social media.

A Brief Overview of the Reception Theory

The reception theory is founded on the notion of active audiences, called receivers. Reception theory argues that texts can be interpreted in different ways depending on cultural circumstances (age, gender, class, race, geography and psychograph) and the way audiences decode (interpret) media messages (Pitout, 2009, p. 398). So reception theories reject conception of a single objective truth emerging from the analyses of texts. Therefore, audience researchers evaluate the way individuals receive and interpret a text (in this case a negative political advert) and how individual circumstances (demographics) affect their reading—decoding, interpretation and meaning (ibid.). This is a definition of reception we adopt in the acknowledgement that there are many reception theories. Below, we also illustrate what we considered as variables in measuring the reception of political advertisements.

Variables Used to Measure the Reception of Negative Political Advertisements

Political advertisements affect the public. Pinkleton et al. (2002, p. 14) established that "the effects of negative advertising strategies on voter decision-making are poorly understood". Such effects have an impact on

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the reception of the advertisement and are likely to be identified by the reactions that emanate from the viewed political advertisement. Researchers have identified diverse variables that are influential in the reception of negative political advertising. The variables identified include the following issues: negativism, cynicism, level of involvement (brand loyalty), apathy, trustfulness and demographics (ibid.). Although, this list is non-exhaustive, these variables are useful as a starting point. They are described below.

Some literatures (Schreiner & Mattes, 2011; Schulz-Herzenburg, 2014; Sides, Lipsitz & Grossmann, 2010) indicate that negative campaign tactics are commonly blamed for escalating voter's cynicism because they arguably contribute to low interest in public affairs and reduce voter turnout. In definition, political linked *cynicism* "refers to a lack of confidence and a feeling of distrust towards the political system" (Pinkleton et al., 2002, p. 15). Cynicism represents a cognitive state, which is essentially closed to new information. As a result, cynical persons may respond more to messages that further confirms their distrusting belief and less positive messages. This represents some form of cognitive dissonance. Linked to cynicism is the concept of *self-efficacy*. Pinkleton et al. (2002, p. 16) define self-efficacy as a person's belief that through his or her efforts, he or she can influence political and social events. Without a considerable degree of self-efficacy, political apathy often results. *Apathy* reflects a failure to engage on even the most basic forms of public affairs, including voting (Atkin & Heald, 1976; Pinkleton et al., 2002, p. 16).

A dominant tactic in negative political advertising is in the making of untruthful accusations regarding the opponent. Therefore, the perceived truthfulness of negative political advertising may determine its impacts. Persuasion research indicates that the more credible a source, the more persuasive the message (Bernays, 1955). Perceptions of *truthfulness* therefore become the basis for trustworthiness and believability. Pinkleton's (1997, p. 21) concept of *factual substantiation* is similar to Garramone's (1984) notion of truthfulness. Similarly, Pinkleton (1997, p. 21) postulated that when negative political advertisements were perceived to be unbelievable and self-motivated to benefit the source, counter-argumentation or a backlash is likely to emerge, thereby reducing the effectiveness of the message. Therefore, it can be posited that perceived truthfulness is positively associated with the approval of the advertisement. That is, the more the advertisement is perceived to be truthful, there more it's message is likely to be believed.

Level of involvement may influence the impact of negative political advertisement. Involvement is defined as the personal relevance or meaning that a particular message (political advertising) or response (e.g. voting) has for

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the individual. When involvement is low, the advertising may be influential (Garramone, 1984, p. 251). The argument is that highly involved voters are less likely to display the intended effects of such advertising than voters who are less involved. Negative comparative political advertisements are likely to be particularly effective for audiences who are hugely involved, knowledgeable and already in support of the sponsoring candidate (Pinkleton, 1997, p. 21).

Additional measurements in negative political advertising are that of Hill (1989) who measured the dichotomy between pleasant/unpleasant, sensitive/insensitive and tasteful/tasteless. Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991), for example, looked at advertising credibility such as fairness, tastefulness and believability. They also evaluated the relevance of power on the advertisement on whether it is convincing, informative or persuasive. However, the variable described by Hill (1989) and Johnson-Cartee and Copeland (1991) are used in this chapter to analyze the advertisement and its reception.

Methodology

This chapter is underpinned by an interpretative approach. We are interested in making sense of reception reactions and expression as recorded in a social media discussion platform about a negative political advertisement. In analyzing the data, the researchers relied on the aspects of qualitative (virtual ethnography and thematic analysis) as well as quantitative (numerical indices) research methodologies. The mixed methods approach helped provide reasonable and balanced interpretation of the data. The chapter reports the results of a social media text analysis to the DA election (negative) political advertisement on YouTube titled 'i-ANC Ayisafani'. The advertisement attracted a total of 719,743 views on YouTube (by September 2014). The research strategy was to solicit such comments during the height of South Africa's (2014) election season. For feasibility reasons, the sample drawn for this article amounted to a total of 200 comments. Both inductive and deductive modes of analyses were employed. The deductive method sought to look at variables that emerged from literature in terms of how they influenced the effectiveness of negative political advertising which are cynicism, self-efficacy, level of involvement (brand loyalty), as well as trustfulness. The inductive analysis identified additional and original themes as they emerged

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from the empirical findings. The sections below discuss the findings from the research underpinning this chapter. The quotes from YouTube were responses to the broadcast of the 'i-ANC Ayisafani' on the social media channel accessed September 2014.

Limitations of the Study

In part, the study underpinning this chapter relies on elements of virtual ethnography to understand the reactions of online communities that participated in the social media discussion of the YouTube video. According to Domínguez et al. (2007), new media, including the internet, becomes a space where social interactions are practiced, where meanings are created and where identities are intermingled. Therefore, virtual ethnography allows researchers to undertake a virtual study on such spaces. The problem with conducting such ethnographic research in a virtual environment is that the demographics of online participants are difficult to confirm. It should be noted that for the research study underpinning the chapter, the demographic make-up of the social media participants was difficult to ascertain. Therefore, the demographic precision of the studied population was not considered during the research, as the details of the participants could not be identified with precision. Online media participants choose the identities that they create online based on many factors: including the severity and implications of their comments. However, it should be noted that these online communities have helped to discover the value that people place on negative political advertising in South Africa. Broadcasting negative political advertising was a new phenomenon in South Africa at the time of the study. This research, therefore, becomes useful in understanding voters' reaction and the importance they place on the broadcast of political advertisements banned as "negative".

Findings and Discussion

Although the identities of users leaving comments on the YouTube microblog could not be ascertained (as explicated above), they can be inferred as mostly black and white South Africans. It can also be assumed from the comments that the majority were either ANC or DA members. There were also a number of participants that seemed to be non-aligned. The themes emerging from the data on YouTube are captured in the graph

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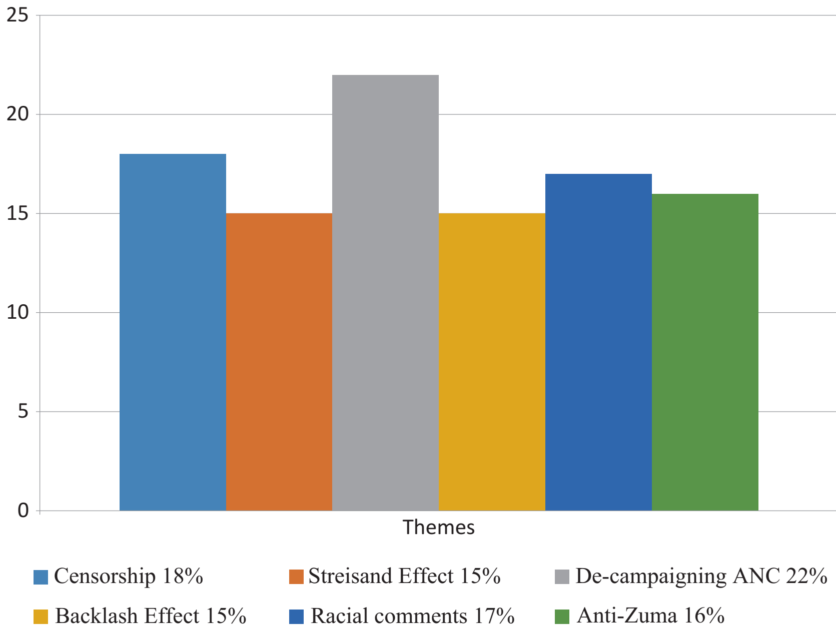

Fig. 13.1 Emerging themes

below. They are conceptually explained in the rest of the discussion section. Furthermore, the research results are infused into the discussion of these related themes (Fig. 13.1).

Censorship

The banning of the political advertisement was largely seen in terms of growing concerns about censorship in South Africa. In a constitutional democracy, one can understand why censorship emerged as a key discussion issue. The findings indicate that 18% of the data reflected an anti-censorship stance. A range of arguments was raised about the control of the public broadcaster (SABC) by the ANC and its lack of political freedom and independence, which leads to censorship of political communication. This arises from the fact that the advertisement was initially banned and later unbanned by the public broadcaster. Some comments compared the current ANC government to the apartheid state wherein censorship

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and SABC propaganda were the norm: "What on earth happened to freedom of speech??? Seems like we're back to the old days of limited/censored media!! The ANC is the new NP". This was in reaction to the banning of the advertisement by the SABC. The social media data indicates that only a small number (5%) of comments defended the merits for which the advertisement could have legitimately been banned. One comment left on the YouTube microblog argued:

> The advert deserved to be banned. We need solutions not continual reminder of failures. This ad doesn't inform anyone of the means to overcome the issues we facing as a country.

In essence, such comments indicate the societal concerns on the political influence of the ANC over the affairs of SABC as a national broadcaster. They also indicate that there is no consensus about the meaning of censorship. This is partly because in South Africa, there seems to be political interests in the use of the word "censorship". Those who have identified the presence of censorship around the advert also insinuated that democracy was under threat. South Africa's history was also invoked by other comments, and as such, relied mainly on the apartheid history and the related censorship practices of the era. Those who dismiss the presence of censorship have mainly based their argument on the appropriateness of the advert and whether the message takes the country forward.

The Streisand Effect

The Streisand effect is a term associated with the musician, Barbra Streisand. The concept suggests that an attempt to banish or censor something controversial often leads to a viral surge of interest within the public sphere thus spurring 'a must see level of interest' (Pinkleton et al., 2002). Several comments (15%) in the data referred to the Streisand effect. Comments alluding to this effect ranged from criticism about the SABC to ban the advertisement and the impact this decision has had on the popularity of the advertisement. Several commentators explicitly blamed the upsurge in the viewing of this advertisement to the ICASA and SABC's decision to censor it. Furthermore, a number of other commentators indicate that the only way to uncensor the advertisement was by making it 'go viral' on the internet despite its ban by the national broadcaster. They emphasized commitments toward making the *Ayisafani* advertisement go

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viral in order to defy censorship and spread the message before the elections. This suggests that the receivers to some extent appreciate the value of YouTube as an alternative platform for political communication, especially for what was banned by mainstream/public broadcasting media.

The following comment is an example of how a decision to ban the advertisement was interpreted by the commentators:

> …Way to get an ad more exposure? Ban it. "The DA's advert originally banned by the ANC, sorry SABC, has nearly half a million views on YouTube. Talk about shooting yourself in the foot and helping the advert go viral".—"This is another example of what happens when you try to ban something from being aired".—The SABC, has shown that it is a propaganda machine of the ANC. They've obviously never heard of the Streisand Effect.—"We need this video to go viral … Our country's future depends on it".

The proposed mode of peer-to-peer sharing added with connectivity among social media networks could be a genesis to a new era of political advertising in South Africa. From these comments, it is clear that the advertisement was made more popular through the Streisand effect phenomena. The Streisand effect would have been less effective had the advertisement not been of a negative nature and had the ruling party (which is also the target of attack by the advert) not banned it.

DA De-campaigning of the ANC Brigade and the Backlash Effect

The term 'de-campaigning of the ANC' was repeated in many comments. The term refers to an 'attack' or the defaming political campaign which focuses on the competing political party rather than on what the political party defaming other political parties actually stands for (policies and programs of that specific political party). Before 2014, negative political advertisements were less predominant in South Africa and part of the reasons of this is that they were never welcomed by the voting public. The findings of this chapter solidify the argument, which indicates that South African voters are mature voters more and interested in substantial issues and solutions (rather than image, political public relations and competition). The findings of this chapter indicate that social media participants wanted to know what the DA is offering as their policies and solutions to challenges that most South Africans are already familiar with. The following comments exemplify this argument.

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> The entire DA manifesto is centred on decampaigning the ANC. As a result, most of us know what the DA stands AGAINST, but not what it stands FOR.
>
> The funny thing is the DA is supposed to be campaigning for the election, not pointing out the wrongs of the ANC, we can see them, we live in South Africa. So instead of pointing out the obvious, maybe they should tell us what they intend to do.
>
> The DA has not really communicated what they can do for Mzanzi or me as an individual, all I know is that they are an anti-ANC party—I still don't know what the DA is promising me as a voter.

The social media comments quoted above indicate that online participants picked a certain element of the advertisement and problematized it as a weakness of the DA. Somehow, this was inevitable because the political advertisement under discussion was that of a controversial nature. This is called the backlash effect and is further explored below.

The Backlash Effect

In analyzing the comments to the political advertisement, the chapter also concludes that the de-campaigning of the ANC by the advertisement sort of elicited a 'backlash effect'. The backlash effect refers to a phenomenon wherein sympathy is created for the targeted party rather than the attacking party. This confirms Pinkleton et al. (2002, p. 27) postulation that negative political advertising sometimes works against the sponsoring candidates by engendering more support for a target candidate. Mainly such sentiments were viewed to be coming from people who have established ideological alignment to the governing ANC. Moreover, this confirms the suggestion from literature that highly involved receivers are unlikely to accept the content of the negative political advertisement that they highly support. Therefore, it can be postulated at this point that to a certain degree, the 'i-ANC Ayisafani' advertisement managed to garner and consolidate some support for the ANC. This was counter to the intended effect of the political advertisement. The following comments illustrate this point.

> The Democratic Alliance should seize this unrelenting tendency of thinking they are holier than thou. Where DA leads, WESTERN CAPE is poverty stricken (sic)…They are too occupied spreading propaganda amongst the Black people. iWESTERN CAPE AYISAFANI!! (Western Cape is no longer the same).

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> This is a weak approach to sponsorship lol. Guys please, don't stop this low, show people what you are offering not what someone else isn't.
>
> The truth of this particular argument is that this ad has just been another platform for some bitter white South Africans to covertly state their disapproval of blacks running their own affairs.
>
> I myself would never vote for a party that bashes other parties as their campaign instead of simply winning votes because of their values, strategies and actions

Therefore, it is clear that in some instances, the so-called negative political advertisement do not necessarily achieve their intended objective. Depending on the ideological stance of the people that the political message is directed to, negative political adverts are likely to fail in some constituencies.

Anti-Zuma and the Mandela Legacy

This theme indicates that the advert was successful in isolating most of the problems of the ANC to the leadership of then South African President, Jacob Zuma. The content of the advertisement indicates that several comments—16%—had 'anti-Zuma' undertones and sometimes overtones. Some comments were so harsh as to mention that:

> Since Zuma arrived, the ANC is a shameless party, how much more can you be greedy for money? Zuma, if God wills, you will be zoomed out this year…

However, it should be noted that a significant amount of comments were also made in defense of the ANC. Of those comments that were raised in defense of the ANC, it should be further noted that only a minimal number of comments were raised to defend the specific conducts of then President Zuma. This points to proclivity of receivers to separate the political party from the perceived conduct of individuals who lead the political party. In this case, the image of a political party is protected from the individuals who are perceived to be conducting themselves in a politically unsavory fashion. Some of the comments also alluded to the legacy of the late former president Nelson Mandela, and how his contribution to South Africa was being tarnished by the Presidency of Jacob Zuma:

> You think you are honouring tata Madiba by voting for the party he gave his life for? But you are voting for the party that disgraced his name. 27 years in jail and this is what they do to say thank you?

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> The ANC has managed to undo what Mandela did in such a little period of time. Nelson Mandela is ashamed of you, even in death, as he rolls in his grave.

This theme therefore indicates that the social media participants singled out the leadership of President Zuma as being problematic to the ANC. This can be seen as one of the successes of the DA's political advertisement. In its content, the advertisement tried to isolate the presidency of Zuma as being problematic, and among most of the participants, the data indicates that the social media participants share this argument.

Self-Efficacy and the Belief to Make Change Through Votes

This figure (Fig. 13.2) indicates the levels of efficacy as indicated by the comments of social media participants. This is the recorded reactions of the participants as being able to institute change through the voting process. Self-efficacy is related to and can be measured by the degree of cynicism on the comments or the optimisms of voting commitments indicated in the commentary.

Some scholarship on the subject matter indicates that negative political advertisements generate cynicism, despondency and apathy toward participation in matters of public affairs and reduce voters' turnover (Pinkleton et al., 2002). Although we cannot conclude on the effect of the advertisement on the turnout of voters, or whom they voted for, we can conclude

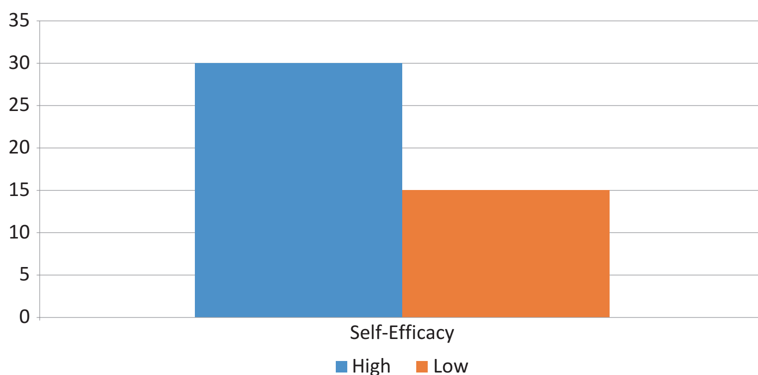

Fig. 13.2 Self-efficacy

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on the cynicism and efficacy that was *actually* articulated on the platform of analysis. The following comments display cynicism caused by the 'i-ANC Ayisafani' advert:

> Wow the comments to this video are so effective at killing any hope I have for SA. But seriously though DA, is this the strategy—to shun ANC's integrity? This is why the future of this country looks bleak.

However, it should be noted that there were only a few of these despondent comments in the data sample of this study. It can be concluded that the 'i-ANC Ayisafani' advertisement did not enhance voter's level of cynicism to public affairs. There were only a few comments (20%) that displayed a lack of confidence in the South African voting system and voting culture. The cynical comments mostly lamented the racial divisions in which South Africans vote and a general unwillingness of the South African voter to investigate and base their voting decision-making on policy matters, issues and facts, rather than on ideologies.

The perceived value of voting known as 'self-efficacy' is related to cynicism and voting apathy. A high degree of self-efficacy has been recorded in this data. An example of a comment indicating a high efficacy argued: "On 07 May 2014 I am going to give myself and my family a better chance on life". Approximately 30% of the data display a high self-efficacy while 15% display a low degree of self-efficacy. This means that South Africans were hopeful and more committed to voting in the 2014 elections. High self-efficacy was observed on all commitments to go and vote and on written encouragement for others to go vote. Low self-efficacy entailed all comments that reflected despondency. Surprisingly this insinuates that this 'negative' political advertisement had a positive effect on self-efficacy as demonstrated by commitments to go vote (for or against the DA) (Fig. 13.3).

Truthfulness

Literature argues that the perceived truthfulness of negative political advertising may determine its impacts. Perceptions of *truthfulness* are the basis for believability. Truthfulness in the study underpinning this chapter was determined by the level in which the voter found the content of the advert to be honest and factual. We acknowledge that we cannot conclude on the effects of the 'perceived' truthfulness on the impact of the

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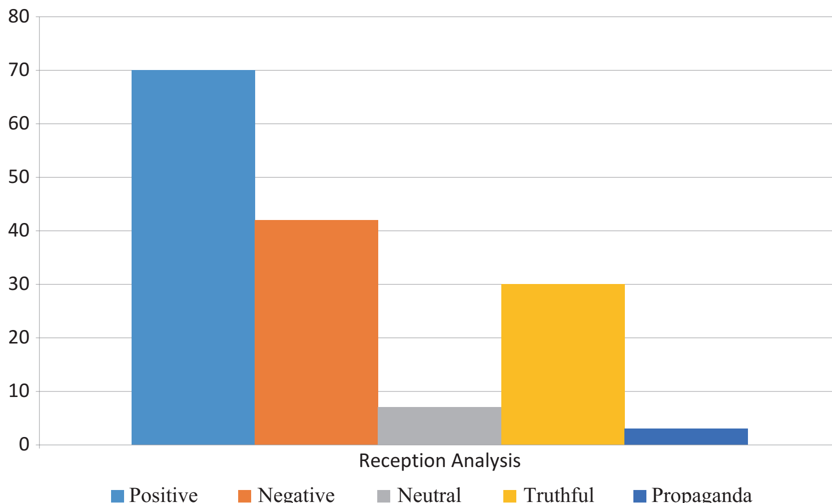

Fig. 13.3 Reception analysis

advertisement. The data demonstrates a high level of truthfulness. Thirty percent of the comments noted that the advert was factual and truthful while a marginal 3% of the comment noted that the advertisement was nothing more than DA's propaganda and fabrications. Even those comments that disapproved the advertisement did not necessary dispute it as 'non-factual' content. The following comments illustrate this point.

> Hard hitting honesty, big ups DA!—Excellent, telling the truth and asking questions
>
> This advert by the DA was banned from SABC … however, it is the truth and someone does not want the masses seeing the truth!
>
> There is nothing wrong or incorrect with what the DA has said but all I know is I have seen it for myself. 'i-ANC Ayisafani'.
>
> What the anti-DA or pro-ANC commenters have failed to do is actually prove that anything in this advert was actually untrue.

Levels of Involvement (Brand Loyalty) and Racial Alignments

The argument from the literature is that highly involved voters are less likely to display the intended effects of negative advertising than are voters less highly involved (McNair, 2011). The data proves that negative

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political advertisements are unlikely to generate opinion change in audiences already supportive or opposing of a political party. Brand loyalty proved to be the main catalyst in determining how voters/receivers felt about the 'i-ANC Ayisafani' advert. South African voters are highly involved and emotional voters. ANC supporters were disgusted by the advertisement while DA supporters were supportive of the advertisement. Due to the difficulty to ascertain which comments were from DA or ANC supporters, we cannot posit whether the advertisement did or did not succeed in changing political affiliation or in persuading voters to join the DA.

> All these comments about researching the different parties before voting make me laugh. Fact of the matter is that South Africans vote based on whether the party is perceived to be a "white" majority party or a "black" majority party.
>
> When evidence of a party's wrongdoing comes to light it should be seen as just that, not racial rhetoric. A democracy can never work as long as it is a series of political fan clubs.
>
> I am not surprised that about 8 out of every 10 people commenting are white. DA is still pretending to be racially and culturally diversified.

Racial comments were prolific among YouTube comments regarding the advert. This formed a dichotomy of opinions. On one hand, there were arguments that the decent, educated and smart blacks were rational enough to vote color blind. On the other hand, a few other receivers commented about the state of black people in the DA. For instance, Mmusi was called a sell-out: "Mmusi Van der Maimane you are just dreaming". However, not all comments were racially divisive. A majority of racial comments called for unity and voting rationality.

> You are embarrassing the decent and smart blacks who want the best for the rainbow nation, and that is why you can only intimidate them, because you have no brains, integrity, or decency.
>
> Uncle Tom, we see you. The DA … uses BLACK people as puppets for their own selfish gains.

The above quotes demonstrate the dichotomy between the racial comments. The brand loyalty was also straddled along the racial line proving that South African voters are highly involved and emotional voters. As literature has precept that highly involved voters are unlikely to be

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influenced by a negative political advertisement, this insinuation proved correct. The following is the conclusion to our findings.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that despite the perceived negativity of the advertisement by the SABC, receivers as shown by attitudes of users on YouTube do not appreciate the censorship of it. They instead indicated a preference to be allowed room to make own sense of political advertisement themselves. The other key finding is that the banning of the advertisement by ICASA and the SABC in fact contributed to the *Streisand effect*, a phenomenon which elevated an interest on the DA's 'i-ANC Ayisafani' advertisement. The Streisand effect did not only incite interest on the advertisement but also sparked discussions surrounding the censorship of advert, which invoked the critique of the ANC as an authoritative party seeking to sensor negative political information about itself. These comments brought into question the independence of both ICASA and the SABC. The Streisand effect would have been impossible if the DA's 'i-ANC Ayisafani' campaign was not in the category of negative political advertisements and if the advert was not banned in the first place.

To some extent, this case study demonstrated the perceived value of social media as an alternative media/public sphere platform for censored political information and content. Receivers as online users trusted YouTube to make the advertisement go viral, and with the effect of uncensoring political communication banned in mainstream media. This was of course back in 2014 when the regulation of social media was marginal. Since then, the regulation of the internet in South Africa has become stricter with new proposed laws such as the Amendment to the Film and Publication Bill, which aims to empower the Film and Publication Board (FPB) to regulate online content, including commentary. The majority of receivers did not appreciate the political de-campaigning of oppositional parties (as in the negative political advertisement then at hand) without engaging citizens on the policies and development of their own party. This indicated that South Africans were mature voters who are more interested in issues and solutions (rather than image, political public relations and competition). Even when the content of the advertisement was predominately perceived as true, the chapter concludes that the de-campaigning of the ANC by the advertisement sort of elicited a 'backlash effect'. This confirms the postulation of literature that negative political advertising

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sometimes works against the sponsoring candidates by engendering more support for a target candidate. Although we cannot conclude on the effect of the advertisement on the turnover of voters or who they voted for, we can conclude on the cynicism and efficacy that was *actually* articulated on the platform of analysis.

Overall, the findings from the analyzed data indicate that social media platforms play an important role as uncensored public sphere platforms during a country's election. This chapter concludes that the intersection of negative political advertisement and social media helped in eliciting rigorous and online debate about the state of governance and political party loyalty affairs in post-apartheid South Africa.

Notes

1. Then SABC spokesperson, Kaizer Kganyago, in an interview with the SABC Digital News mentioned that statements such as 'police are killing our people' incites violence against the police and that the advert makes personal attacks against certain individuals which is not permissible in the Broadcasting Act. The interview is accessible [30/07/2019] from http://www.sabcnews.com/sabcnews/sabc-speaks-out-on-da-advert/.
2. The rationale for not attaching names and other demographic information with the comments has already been made in the section outlining the limitations of this study. What we would like to emphasize therefore is that the matter of keeping the comments nameless is rational and should be understood within the context of the study being exploratory and thus focusing on the 'what' question instead of the 'who' question. However, the demographical details can be easily tracked in the YouTube advertisement (Democratic Alliance, 2014, April 8) (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g6jU2bZxGKI [Retrieved: 27/04/2019].

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